EVER AFTER

JULIET WILBOR TOMPKINS

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EVER AFTER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PLEASURES AND PALACES
MOTHERS AND FATHERS
OPEN HOUSES
THE TOP OF THE MORNING
DOCTOR ELLEN

"I thought I was willing to pay the price"

EVER AFTER

BY

JULIET WILBOR TOMPKINS

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EVER AFTER

CHAPTER ONE

CANDACE WARE stood on the veranda enjoying the sense of finished work. It was the first morning in months that had given her leisure to stand in the sun with her arms folded, and all her square, strong figure, relaxed against a pillar, showed her satisfaction in the moment. Candace's slow, close-lipped smile curled up at the corners, and her little brown eyes took the same curl when she was pleased, giving the hardy, boyish face an impersonal sort of charm, a promise of good fellowship and of a massive, almost an immoral, tolerance. But for this mellow quality, she showed the undated youthfulness of mind and body that the modern woman of forty has so suddenly and remarkably acquired. Candace's mother, at her age, had worn caps and considered it more graceful and fitting not to dress in the immediate fashion. Her daughter, trimly shirtwaisted, with three good inches of daylight above her mannish Oxfords, could still be seriously referred to as a girl.

The old farmhouse stood on a great, rounded knob of land that thrust it well up into a sky of

noble breadth. It was sky that one saw there before anything else, vasty deeps of cloud-billowed sky, an azure immensity that overwhelmed the little world of farms and woods, reducing it to a pebble lying under a mighty palm. Clear green meadow rolled away from the house indefinitely in front, but on the sides and back it broke against jutting capes and islands of compact woodland. Well down the slopes, four pine shacks, rough but charming, each with a high window to the north to explain its calling, hid from one another behind shoulders and curves of hill: to the east, where the tangled sumach merged into the woods, another roof might be made out, and from the deeper growth to the west came the faint notes of a piano, implying a sixth cabin. In this hidden retreat a theme was being tried, over and over, with minute variations. Presently the experimenting fingers found what they wanted, and the strain, after many repetitions, rippled into joyous certainty and ended in a triumphant chord. A few moments later a young man came out into the open. Candace's smile deepened as she watched his approach. Dana Malone, like his cabin, was part of her work.

There were broad streaks of gray in his heavy black hair: his eyes, deep set and darkly earnest, seemed to have looked on many things, and the irregular, cleft chin had the thrust of one who had

needed all his determination; and yet he was a boy. Some magic preservative — the West in his blood, or the streak of genius — had kept his spirit at nineteen while his years were at twenty-nine. He carried an air of unsnubbed good will, suggestive of frank, new civilizations, and his speech came tumbling out on a note of excited discovery the moment it could be heard.

"You can always do it if you want to!" he declared. "It's only a matter of wanting to enough and *sitting*. I tell you, Candy, if you sit faithfully, you can do anything on earth." He dropped down on the step with a slight gasp for breath.

"I've got a pupil who has been sitting for thirty years, and she can't paint yet," said Candace.

"Oh, well, if she hasn't got it in her — that's different. But if it's there, I mean. This going round waiting for it to come to you is all nonsense. You must sit it out. That's the way you train it to come, by jinks! It's the way I do, anyway." He looked off over the rolling land, then stretched his long arms above his head. "I'm so happy, I'm so happy," he chanted.

She smiled her understanding. "Life hasn't spoiled us very much, has it?" she observed.

He answered with an emphatic, "Not so that you would notice it;" then reconsidered. "I don't know. I've got a good deal."

"Inside you," she assented. "I believe I am coming to the age when I like a little something outside, myself."

Again he burst into song, chanting on a high key: "I have escaped the subway, I am done with the elevated, I have hills and fields and a great sky over all, and a pi-a-no — Praised by Thy Name!" The solemn invocation was followed by a shout, evidently a necessity to his dangerously expanded heart.

"You're a queer child, Dana." She was looking down at him with never-ending amusement at the contrast between his simple, boyish personality and the delicate subtlety of his music. "I don't understand your talent; I am not sure you have a right to it."

"It's California," he explained gravely. "She puts a gift into your cradle as a matter of course — lovely, big, brown thing!" His rugged face turned hungrily toward the west. "Oh, I'm homesick; I want to go back — don't you?"

"Californians are always homesick;" her tone was cheerfully practical. "I want to make this school a success now. The first pupil comes this afternoon."

"Can she paint?" without much interest.

Candace considered. "If she weren't ten generations or so of straight New England she might; she has talent of a sort — she sees. But she can't let go. She's too careful, some way, ever to get very far."

"But what will the poor girl do?" he asked worriedly. She laughed at him.

"Lucy Cuyler won't starve," she said drily. "She isn't entirely dependent on her painting."

"That's so: people here do have incomes," he admitted. "I'm always forgetting it. No one at home ever seemed to have a cent — except the millionaires, of course."

"But they all had had it twenty years before," she reminded him. "It is our fine, free-handed, damn-the-expense attitude that has done for us, my boy. A little New England carefulness ——"

"W'f!" he burst in. "Not much. Money meanness is the ugliest sin on earth."

"Don't you find penury rather ugly, too?"

Dana ignored that. "I've seen fellows who parted with a dollar as they would with a tooth," he declaimed. "Fellows who always let the other person pay, don't you know? and who lie awake nights if they think they have been overcharged ten cents. I am poor enough, God knows, but I would chuck fifty dollars in the gutter before I'd haggle over it!"

"You are a survival, Dana," she derided him. "You belong to the days when they threw down a bag of gold dust to pay for a drink, and no gentleman would stoop to take change."

"Well, that is better than counting your nickels. I tell you, Candy, money meanness is a big, black

sin. It can make people do more cruel, ugly things than any vice I know."

"Oh, nonsense. I could show you delightful people who will give anything except money. It's an idiosyncrasy, not a vice."

His headshake was violent. "Don't go back on your Western blood, Candy."

"One starts out like that," she admitted; "but I don't know. Money's money."

"Then why do you spend a large part of yours on other people?"

She laughed. "Bad habit. I can't seem to believe my own experience." Dana frowned.

"What's the sense of always talking like a pirate when you always act like a guardian angel? It doesn't fool any one."

"Then where's the harm?" she asked.

"The trouble with you, Candy," he began with the assurance of old acquaintance, but she cut in with a good humoured,

"The trouble with you, Dana Malone, is that you haven't found yourself out." She stretched her tired arms, then let them drop, and turned to the open door behind them. "Come and see how nice the house looks. Everthing is ready."

Candace had scooped out the first floor of the farmhouse like a hallowe'en pumpkin. The old entry, parlour and sitting-room were now one long,

generous apartment, broadside to the south, while kitchen, buttery, and best bedchamber had been turned into an equally long room to the north. The latter was bare but for easels, camp chairs, and a small platform, but to the other had been added every homely charm compatible with its uses. It gave a sunny impression of buttercup yellow and clear white; there was a sober gleam of pewter, the blond shine of deep willow chairs, and rag rugs lay like blurred rainbows on the brown floor. A narrow dinner table of dark oak ran half its length, and against the west wall stood an aged sideboard laden with china, primitive but richly green: the other end was given up to fireplace and bookshelves. The rooms upstairs, including the space over the new kitchen ''tion, had been multiplied into many small, fresh, white bedrooms. Dana was profoundly impressed. He was always a satisfactory audience for achievements, having an endless capacity for astonishment. "Well, what do you think of that!" was his constant comment as Candace showed him her various devices for neatness, space, and charm.

"Why, your fortune's made. You can't help it," he exclaimed, as they came downstairs again. "Pupils will fall over each other to come. You will have to add on more "

"But only the land is mine, you know," she inter-

rupted. "That and the idea. My angel backer won't take interest, but I mean to pay her the principal before I do any more building, let me tell you."

"And the cabins for us poor devils — that was your idea, too, wasn't it?"

Candace smiled shrewdly. "That's the way I got her interested. That is the philanthropy part, don't you see? My summer school is just an incident — to her."

"Well, God bless the old lady and keep her prosperous," said Dana solemnly. A laugh escaped Candace, but she did not explain.

Although the lunch gong could not be expected for half an hour yet, the "poor devils" of the cabins were already coming hopefully back from wood and field, some with canvases and camp-stools under their arms. Serious but struggling talent and the ability to pay a modest sum for board were the only stated requirements for admission to Sky Farm; and admission meant three months' right to a delicious pine cabin and the freedom of a region still half wild and rich in beauty. If there were other requirements, Candace did not mention them; but a noticeable sobriety marked these first tenants, and one of them, who had brought a prim and somewhat hungry looking wife, had been given a marked concession in his board rate. Candace realized that, with her summer school open, she was approaching

fire to gunpowder, but she felt an amused adequacy to the situation—especially when she reviewed her cottagers. Dana Malone was the only one who suggested combustible properties, and she had no misgiving about her ability to deal with him. The fact that they had both been born in Oakland seemed to give her an elder-sisterly authority, and his struggle, as well as his talent, was appealingly genuine.

At the first clang of the iron triangle hung on the porch they came hurrying up the green slopes, Dabney, with his wife's hand under his arm, well in advance. The struggle was ending for these two, for the poetic quality, the elusive delicacy and mystery, of Dabney's etchings was at last being discovered; but it was ending too late for anything but relief. About their patient mouths lay ineffaceable grooves of weariness, the shadow of lost children. They walked with their heads bent toward each other, but did not talk. Behind them, streaming conversation, came Palmer Jacks, large, blooming, handsome, a big gray moustache sweeping the seasoned ruddiness of his cheeks, carrying his thin old serge suit with an easy air of having bought it in London, wearing a Panama of fifteen years back as though he had chosen it in aristocratic preference over twenty new ones. After half a lifetime of cheerful failure in business, Palmer Jacks had sud-

denly entered on a middle age of cheerful succes as a painter. His landscapes were not of a hig order, but they made a naïve appeal to the romanti and the young in heart. From the very first peopl had stopped to look; now they were actually be ginning to buy.

"But do we want you encouraged?" Candace had objected when he begged admission. "Why a bat tered old worldling like you should paint nooks and grottos and dingles, I don't see! Your nature al ways looks as if it were meant to flirt in. In anothe year you'll be painting best sellers."

"Well, for God's sake, let me get a square mea this year," he had persisted with his subterranean chuckle.

"You ought to do kittens coming out of slippers and little girls giving doll tea-parties," Candace had grumbled, but she had let him in. Ludlam was with him, a complacent young fellow with a pointed blond beard, who looked out from under his eyelids like a girl when he conversed, and who was becoming known as a painter of skies, great, bold, sweeping skies in every mood, the land beneath being little more than a purple shadow or a watery gleam. Near them, yet apart, Adamovitch, a fragile young Russian Jew, followed with bent head. Adamovitch had been forbidden his violin for the present, but the cabin in the sumach bushes occasionally found its

voice and cried out its master's secrets — the eternal secrets of youth, of the alien, of the mounting spirit held down by the lagging body — to the placid June dusk. A lame decorator named Willing came hobbling in on a crutch after the rest were seated. Willing was also forbidden to work, but his cabin, in its vocal moments, gave out only a cheerful whistle. "Just my luck," in his vocabulary, meant a special brand of good fortune He was an ageless little man, somewhere between a withered thirty and a juvenile fifty, and Palmer Jacks cherished a theory that his brain was under some pressure and had not grown up.

"Gad! Wouldn't it be fun to trepan him, and see him wake up to what rotten luck he's really got," he had exclaimed to Candace the first night. "His is the kind of cheerfulness that drives strong men to drink. You haven't any beer, have you?"

"Now look here, Palmer, if he drives you to beer in twelve hours, what will it be at the end of twelve weeks?"

"I'd hate to tell you," with a sigh. "If you could only publish Willing, what a ten-cent magazine he'd make! He'd have a circulation of a million and a quarter in two weeks. He's just what the public wants."

Willing dropped into his place with a hopeful glance toward the long stretch of empty table.

"School opens to-morrow, doesn't it, Miss Ware?" he began happily.

"It does." Candace's tone had a good-humoured finality before which Willing looked ingenuously abashed.

"In other words, what's that to us?" interpreted Palmer Jacks.

"I might as well tell you now about meals," Candace went on, ignoring him. "You people will have to breakfast and lunch a quarter of an hour later; that will give us time to have the school meals over and cleared away before you come up. Dinner will be at the usual time, but the girls will want the room afterward, so I can't urge you to linger in the evenings."

"I am sure we never do. We always go straight to our cabin," Mrs. Dabney hurriedly put in. Palmer Jacks's eyes were twinkling.

"Aren't we to see these houris at all?" he demanded.

"You will meet them at dinner," was the firm answer. "They are coming here for hard work, and they don't want interruptions."

"Gad! I never worked so hard I wasn't glad to be interrupted," muttered Jacks.

"I don't see how you can say that," Dana Malone broke in. "When I'm working in earnest, a knock on the door feels like a blow in the face."

Dana had not been there twenty-four hours, but already he objected to Jacks as only the young and reverential can object to him whom they term a scoffer.

"Ah, I pro' ably have not your secret of working in earnest," Palmer returned with mischievous humility. He was well aware of Dana's irritation, and rather liked him for it. "I was a solemn young ass myself once," he admitted to Candace, later. "Teach him to laugh and he'll be all right. There's a good job for your missionary instincts this summer."

She shook her head. "He doesn't need to laugh yet; he's perfectly happy," she explained.

Lucy Cuyler stepped down from the train with the hard-won ease of a shy person who has been early forced into social responsibility. It was evident that seeing her trunk put off and finding her vehicle would have worried her painfully if she had not had to do it so often; and, even as it was, her mouth looked a little too responsible over the business, her eyes too earnest. A trunk seemed to her a thing of fearsome weight. She had an air of strained muscles as the station master received hers into brawny arms, disdaining a truck.

"It is far too heavy," she murmured, with a faint gasp for his effort. He smiled down paternally at the disturbed face. Its mature gravity was amus-

ingly tempered by the curves of childhood that still lingered in the rounded cheeks, and people were apt to smile at it when it was most responsible. Very old ladies were fond of telling Lucy that she was like her Great Aunt Betty, whose spirit had left an aroma that still lingered in old corners of her native town. She had the same soft colourings — blue and brown and rose — as the portrait in the Museum, but was saved from its picture-book prettiness by the look of race, of inherited meaning, that the artist had thought best to soften in Great Aunt Betty's thoughtful brow and dignified little nose.

"Ho! That's nothing." The man gave the trunk an extra [illegible]d, to reassure her. "If you're one of them art students, she told Jim Lee to have a rig here for you," he added. "That's him, with the white horse. I'll bring this."

Jim Lee, roused from contemplation of the sky line, looked the questioner well over before answering that the fare would be a dollar and a half. Jim always looked a stranger over before answering, and a dollar and a half was the regular rate; but his deliberation suggested a calculated extortion, based on appearances, and Lucy's lips straightened, obliterating the youthful softness of the moment before and bringing out a faint suggestion of her Grandfather Cuyler. Old Adrian Cuyler, by his shrewdness and his minute caution, had lifted his large

family from affluence to wealth, but money was not the only thing that he had handed down to his descendants.

"That is too much," said Lucy, timid but stern. "It is only three miles."

"It's uphill all the way, lady. Can't take you for less." Then, seeing another wagon edging up, Jim relented a little. "Tell you what," he confided; "I won't charge you nothing extra for your trunk."

That sounded reasonable, and Grandfather Cuyler, having no means of knowing that the trunk always went for nothing, felt free to withdraw his influence, leaving Lucy to climb happily into the back seat of the battered surrey. She had another distressed moment wondering whether she should fee the paternal station master, and watched him uneasily, a furtive quarter in her hand, as he swung her trunk into Jim Lee's languid grasp. He paused for a remark on the weather, his hand resting on the wheel in friendly equality, and, seeing by his straight American glance that a tip would be offensive, she responded with the radiance of deep relief. Offering gratuities was always misery to her, a misery compounded of a subtle shame for the other person and a great dread of wounding. And, then, a quarter was a quarter! She dropped it into her purse with unconscious satisfaction as they drove off.

The divided influences of Lucy Cuyler's inheri-

tance were quaintly reflected in her appearance. With a suit that was the perfection of tailoring, a plain serge of plutocratic distinction, she wore a pleasant, flowered hat that any modest shopgirl might have chosen. Her gloves were fresh and extravagantly delicate, her little tan shoes shabby and unpolished, with worn heels, while against her aristocratic pigskin bag leaned a not-quite-silk umbrella with a bunch of artificial cherries on the handle. But, if her belongings were undiscriminated, her love and knowledge of natural things were evidently strong and discerning. As they wound up the great, broad-backed green hills, she sat forward in her eagerness, studying every gracious curve and dip of the land with vivid satisfaction, lifting her face to the sunny odours of the fields and the cool breath of the woods. Two thirds of the journey had been made in absorbed happiness when her glance happened to fall on the horse, and so brought her joy to an end; for she saw that he was limping. She bent forward for a better look.

"Your horse is lame," she exclaimed, troubled and reproachful.

"Oh, he's just kind of footsore," Jim Lee explained, as though that made it all right. "Too much road work, that's all."

"Couldn't you turn him out for a rest?"

"No, lady; not at this time of year."

She watched the old fellow trot wincingly down a slope, then attack the next hill with a deep sigh inflating his slatted sides. "I'll walk up this," she said suddenly, and was on the ground before the carriage could be stopped. "Couldn't you walk, too?" she added diffidently.

"Well, you see, it's like this, lady:" Jim Lee, sprawled in his corner, turned a languid head to explain. "You're likely to meet an automobile any time on these roads. He don't mind them if you've got him in hand; but down on the ground you couldn't do nothing at all."

The steep-pitched, rutted road did not suggest frequent motors, but Lucy was too polite to say so, and followed in clouded silence. The unprotesting, painful tugging of the aged beast wrung her. She would gladly have carried her trunk to ease his load. That being impossible, she pulled off her gloves, put her two small hands on back of the surrey and began to push.

It was so that Dana Malone, coming out on a high bank over the road, first saw them — the limping horse, the lolling man half dozing on the front seat, the girl, flushed and lovely with compassion, pushing with all her touching little might. And Dana, whose heart broke over dumb suffering and flamed up for a generous act — Dana, who could cry any day over newspaper heroics, and never heard

the national anthem without a swelling desire to die for his country, and believed that man was created to serve, protect and cherish woman — Dana Malone was not one to see the absurdity of the group.

"Well, what do you think of that!" he muttered. A moment later he had scrambled down the bank to meet them.

"You mustn't do that! Let me," he exclaimed, so authoritatively that Lucy yielded up her place in startled docility.

"The driver couldn't get out because we might meet a motor," she explained, kindly anxious that not even Jim Lee should make too poor an appearance. A skeptical "H'h!" and a push that surprised the horse relieved Dana's overcharged feelings.

"Please get in again. You won't make any difference," he urged, but she would not.

"I like to walk," she insisted, still a little short of breath. "We must be nearly there."

Dana, pushing lustily, his face turned toward her, could have wished the distance indefinite; the weight on his arms felt chivalrously good. It did not occur to him to make conversation or to explain himself. Shyness was to him an unknown state, and, with all his generous youth still vibrating from that first glimpse of her, he could not descend to the trivialities of convention and treat her like an unintroduced young lady. So he simply looked at her out of

darkly lit eyes and rejoiced. Not having the key to his mood, Lucy grew shy, then uncomfortable. Her stolen glances could not explain this rough figure with his shabby clothes and perfect ease of bearing, his look of youth and the streaks of gray in his black hair. Her lips moved uneasily, and her face turned more and more to the sun-flecked beech trunks and the deep beds of bracken beside the road. The June green that nearly met above their heads was still frail and young in this high world, the day's warmth had a vivid freshness, and the ardour of spring stirred in unseen wings and bubbling throats. Under pretence of a second look for a hidden songster, Lucy fell a few steps behind; and so roused Dana to speech.

"When I'm rich," he declared, looking back with his air of intent discovery, "you know what I'm going to do?" No other beginning could have so interested and reassured her. She came closer. "I'm going to buy up every poor old beast I come across and either kill or cure him. Just to get him off my mind. Wouldn't that be great?"

It was hard for Lucy to enter into conversation; but she was ruled by a very earnest desire to be "big," and she had long ago decided that it was little to admit human intercourse only through the front door. So she met the advance with a conscientious effort to match his directness and simplicity.

"But won't that be rather individual, just to help the ones you see?" she objected, out of her modern training. "Shouldn't you find a way to help them all?"

That was a new idea to Dana. "I suppose so," he admitted reluctantly. "Well, I'd do that, too. But it's the one I saw that I'd get my fun out of! Shouldn't you?"

The question troubled her. "I hadn't thought of either as fun, exactly," she admitted. "It is all such a — such a terrible worry."

"Oh, every good feeling is fun," he explained largely. "Why, the best fun I ever had in my life was hauling a half-drowned pup out of the East River. I wish you could have seen the love feast! He was so grateful, and so glad to be alive, it just broke your heart. Nice pup," he added with a reminiscent shake of his head.

Lucy was rapidly coming to a real ease before his almost primeval unconsciousness.

"Yes, that was fun," she said with the smile that had made Great Aunt Betty famous. Dana's stare deepened: he thought he had never in his life seen anything so lovely as that generous lighting, the shine of a pitying and loving spirit through the delicate mask of shy reserve. For a moment the traces of Jim Lee's horse hung slack, though the hill was at its steepest. Then they paused on an artificial resting-

place, and Lucy saw how heavily her knight-errant was breathing.

"You are doing too much," she said distressfully. "We ought to be there by this time. Do you know Miss Ware's farm?"

The knowledge of who she was flashed into Dana's consciousness before his unpractical mind had reached the question, and startled him into joyous exclamation.

"Oh! Why, of course! Why, you are the first pupil you're Miss Cuyler! I'm staying there, in one of the cabins."

"You are?" It was a vivid response, yet even vanity could not have taken it personally, and Dana had none. "Tell me —— " she paused, hesitating over the question.

"I came yesterday," he volunteered. "You know, there are six cabins, put up by some old lady, a friend of Miss Ware's; and any poor artist can have one free for the summer. I'm a musician myself, and so there's a piano in mine. Did you ever hear of anything like that?"

She was suddenly constrained. "So you like it here?" she asked, her face averted.

"Like it?" They were emerging from the woods, and he looked out over the rolling land with the deep breath of an expanding spirit. "*Like* it? Now look here, Miss Cuyler! Suppose you lodged

in the Black Hole of Calcutta, and dined in a cellar, and took your outing in a subway; and then suppose an angel out of heaven handed you all this free and threw in a piano — do you think 'like it' would be the word?" She flushed, so deeply that he thought his vehemence had been too aggressive, and hastened to soften it. "I have just come, so I'm half cracked," he apologized. "Please don't mind if I rave. See, there is the house now."

They had rounded the hilltop, and only a brief dip lay between them and the last climb up to the spreading old farmhouse set in an immensity of sky. Lucy gave it a quick look, then stopped the carriage.

"I will get in now," she said. "Thank you for helping." Her nod of dismissal was so oblivious of him that Dana turned into a side path with a surprising consciousness of hurt feelings. Lucy, meanwhile, had turned to Jim Lee and nervously opened negotiations. When they pulled up at the door, she had bought the old white horse for thirty dollars.

Candace showed the house to the new pupil before she had taken off her hat, pointing out the cabins to her from the upstairs windows.

"Well, what do you think of your job?" she asked, cheerfully confident, as they came to the end in Lucy's room.

"O Candy!" Lucy turned hastily to shut the open door. "If some one had heard you!"

"They'd have heard only the pure, white truth," was the serene answer. Lucy, still holding the door, faced her with a worried question growing in her eyes.

"Do you think I ought to tell?" she finally brought it out.

"No, r y dear. I don't."

"Still, if it involved you in any lies — "

"It won't. And I shouldn't mind if it did. But I wish you had put up one cabin less and got yourself a decent umbrella."

"I didn't care for that, myself;" Lucy ared surprised at the coincidence of tastes. "L the woman told me it was an unusual bargain; and I do lose them so often, Candy." She was begging for approval, but Candace was relentless.

"See that you lose this as soon as possible, then," she said. "How can you make people think you're an artist with such an atrocity in your possession?"

Lucy, at bay, had courage. "I don't think it is so bad as all that," she said stoutly, putting it out of sight. "It does very well for what I want." She took off her hat, brushing the dust from its undistinguished trimmings with a care that made Candace smile. "I have found such a nice little milliner," she confided. "You wouldn't dream how cheap this was."

"Oh, yes, I would," was the firm answer.

Lucy looked disconcerted. "Don't you think it is pretty and becoming?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then why isn't that enough?" She was almost offended.

"Well, if you like a Mary Ann hat with a Queen Anne suit, it is," was the drawling answer, uttered so good humouredly that Lucy suddenly laughed and flung the hat on a shelf.

"I am glad you approve of something," she said. "Oh, by the way, I have just bought a horse — he limped, and it worried me. You will have to do something with him."

"Upon my word!" Candace's hand fell with affectionate heaviness on the girl's shoulder. "Lucy, you are a duck."

"Don't tell any one I did it," Lucy urged. "Oh, I should so hate it if they found it all out! I simply could not stay. And I want to stay."

"Pretty lonely, down there?"

"Oh, no." She would have stopped there with any one else, but Candace had long ago trampled a breach in the wall of Lucy's reserve, and been rewarded with a confidence that sometimes touched and startled her. "No, not lonely, but responsible. I am always doing such hard things, like addressing committees and meeting boards. There is something to screw up courage for every day, Candy!

Even buying a railroad ticket takes an effort, don't you think?"

Candace's sleepy smile curled her lips and the corners of her eyes. "I suppose it does — for you. You don't need a protector for the big moments of life, Lucy, but you do need some one to help you across streets, don't you?"

"Not up here! I haven't felt so free in years. Candy, do you think it was very selfish of me to rent the North Shore house?"

"Why, child?"

"Why, there are so many people who have always been asked to it every year; they must have counted on it for this summer. I have had them just the same, ever since I have been alone, but you have no idea ——" Loyalty to her guests stopped her, and she ended the sentence with a sigh. "I couldn't be expected to invite any one here, could I?" she added, looking contentedly about her narrow white cell. "Isn't it dreadful to be so glad!"

"Shocking," said Candace.

Lucy's advance to meet the introductions of dinner time and her brave plunge into social relations led Dana Malone to one of his inspired discoveries. When she had excused herself, at the end of the meal, to finish her unpacking, he beckoned Candace aside.

"You know what she's like?" he burst out.

"Queen Victoria! No, wait a moment" — his lifted hand forbade her rising laughter — "I don't mean in looks! But don't you know how, when the Queen was young and had to make a speech from the throne or something, she would be so frightened, yet so perfectly composed? She was too royal to notice her own timidity: her poor little paws might be like ice, but she spoke with the tongues of the Queen of Great Britain and Empress of India. I've read about it. Well, don't you see what I mean?"

Candace considered him with good-humoured severity. "Look here, Dana, if you go to discovering queens among my pupils, there's going to be an empty cabin in the wildwood."

"Oh, come off!" And Dana turned disgustedly away.

"Is she one of the Boston Cuylers?" asked Palmer Jacks from the doorway.

"She lives in Milton," Candace answered, after an almost imperceptible hesitation.

"Poor relation, maybe. I shan't ask her. It's the bitterness of death to be asked if you're one of the Boston So-and-sos when you aren't. I knew a woman who went there from St. Louis with the name of Adams, and the question spoiled her life. She finally married a man named Jones, to end it." Palmer stepped out, and paused on the porch to

light a pipe. "Well, since we're not urged to linger any more, good night!" he said. "Stroll, Ludlam?"

Ludlam followed with his peculiar gracefulness of motion. He ran to long points — fingers, feet, and even nose as well as blond beard, and his coats fitted at the waist, thus cutting him off instantly and forever from Dana Malone's sympathies. Jacks, however, was not troubled by prejudices, and the two wandered away together in companionable silence.

"I am wondering if I shall tell you something," began Ludlam presently, speaking through his favourite smile, a small, clever smile of a cosmopolitan significance. Palmer's love of gossip was as shameless as it was sincere. He removed his pipe and cocked his head for better attention.

"Go ahead," he commanded.

"It begins with a slight adventure of mine, three years ago, down on the North Shore;" Ludlam took up the tale with a visible relish for the pleasures of conversation. "There was a most wonderful bit of coast, entirely cut off by stone walls and 'private property' signs. You know, Jacks, I'm a peculiar person in some ways: I respect other people's rights, even their preferences. I am made that way — I can't be otherwise. But the temptation was overwhelming, and there was no one in sight, so the scrupulous Ludlam dropped over the

wall like any apple thief and began sketching. You remember my picture in the Academy, two winters ago? It was catalogued as 'Earth and Sky and Sea.' Of course, I don't care for that sort of literary tag — to me it was just a happy development of green paint; but they like a title. It made a good deal of a sensation: there was always a crowd about it. That was its beginning, and a cross gardener came near being the end of it. He quite ordered me off. I can't row with such people, so I was meekly going when a delightful young woman in deep mourning came to the rescue, and I was told — very shyly, yet with an air, you understand — that I might sketch there day and night if it so pleased me."

"Well?" Palmer prompted. "I suppose in the second act you saved her life, and in the third you married her?"

Ludlam's smile became very knowing. "You might say that the second act was just beginning. I found out that she was Miss Lucy Cuyler, granddaughter of old Adrian, and sole owner of the place — her mother had recently died. After that, I frankly averaged eight hours a day within sight of her verandas, until I discovered that she had gone away on a visit. I never saw her again until to-night."

Palmer replaced his pipe and smoked thoughtfully

over the news. "So we have an heiress in our midst," he mused.

"That is the mystery of it. Why should she come off here for the summer? Of course, it's a delightful farm, and all that; but, as a man of the world, Jacks, you know as well as I do that such a life is a *pis aller*, a makeshift, a tiding over till more fortunate times. And for a girl who could have anything she chose — "

"If she is old Adrian Cuyler's grandchild she came here to save money — you can bet on that," Palmer began with emphasis, then looked apologetic. "Not but that she seems a very charming young lady," he added with a bow, as if she stood bodily before them.

"We might as well keep it to ourselves, don't you think?" Ludlam suggested with his sidelong, almost coy, glance.

Gad, yes. Can't you see little Willing gawping up at an heiress and asking her how it felt?" Palmer's chuckle was not unkind. "I don't suppose she can paint, do you?"

"Why should she?" returned Ludlam with a twang.

Dana Malone, meanwhile, had gone back very soberly to his cabin. He was troubled, restless, full of sudden despair at the hopeless limitations of his chosen career. Ever since he had left Lucy

that afternoon, a choking sense of loneliness had dragged at his throat. And now, since dinner, seeing her so friendly and so remote, he felt like a beggar in rags outside a palace gate, gazing up at a balcony where a princess sat and did not even know he existed. She would never be aware of him, fine, sweet, shy gentlewoman, queen and little girl in one — yet how she had pushed for that old horse! The thrill of his first sight of her stung him again and again: no repetition of the vision could weaken its poignancy. It kept her human for him, brought her for a flying second within his reach. He even laughed over it — those poor, dear arms! — and stretched his own big muscles, longing to use them again in her service. The thought that perhaps he could play to her came at last like an inspiration. The thick growth about his cabin had already shut out the twilight, but he groped his way to the piano and laid unerring hands on the keys.

Yet he did not play that night. As though the first chord had been a signal, the barrier between himself and the amazing truth fell away, and his hands faltered. Understanding in words had not yet come, but his ready heart leaped to full knowledge. The cabin became a haunted place; the darkness was all a great, warm Presence, and he felt the precious weight of arms on his shoulders,

the moth-touch of lips on his upturned face. When the vision faded he arose, chilled and stiffened to find the night half gone. His face, as he struck a light, was white and frightened.

"Love at first sight," he muttered, as though the phrase had for the first time reached his understanding. "*Love at first sight.* My God, it's really true!"

CHAPTER TWO

It would have been a blessing to Lucy Cuyler's girlhood if her mother had been a poor woman and had been forced to turn her great executive abilities to business purposes. Being denied this outlet, Mrs. Cuyler ran her household with a terrible efficiency. Since she could not rule the private school to which all the "nice girls" of the day went, she had Lucy taught at home; and so the shy child grew to a shy girl with almost no young companionship. Occasionally her cousins swept her off, in an indignant attempt to "rescue" her, but these escapes were not wholly successful. Lucy did her courageous best and looked her prettiest, but there was always a lack of fundamental ease, a sense that the conversation was made, not born. When some brave young man ventured to call, Mrs. Cuyler received him and gave him her vigorous, intelligent views on the topics of the day, while Lucy sat at one side, glad to be relieved of the responsibility and very little interested in the affair. Her paints and the garden, books and dreams and the hunger for beauty made up her rich, secret life, and though a vague,

roseate cloud that she called love lay gloriously along the horizon, she never dreamed of connecting it with any of these calling young men, nervously correct under her mother's eye.

No one had ever come close to her until the secure bulwark of her mother's presence had been swept away, three years before, leaving her stricken and in terror at the inundation of her kindly, sorry world. She had finally run away to elderly relatives down on Long Island, and there, on the white, rolling sand dunes, with the wind sweeping in, keen and salty, from the open sea, she had found Candace Ware. The very tolerance of Candace's smile had been a revelation to her. Lucy had lived with an unrebellious acceptance of shut doors on every side; Candace's tranquil, "But why not?" seemed to set them trembling on their hinges, swinging magically open. What she learned about painting in those laborious weeks under Candace's guidance was as nothing beside what she learned about human companionship and individual liberty. She implored Candace to come and live with her, but could not move her.

"I've got my work to do, child," was her good-humoured ultimatum. But she had promised and made a yearly visit, and their eight weeks in Europe together had been the happiest time of Lucy's life. Candace had paid every penny of her own way,

insisting that Lucy should live down to her level — and twinkling amusedly when she saw that the other really enjoyed their scrimping. It was the poor teacher who insisted on cabs and comforts when they were travel-tired. Candace laughed at her without mercy, yet the girl's faith and devotion had grown to be one of the pleasantest facts of her life.

The cottagers were lingering about the breakfast table when Lucy came down the next morning. Mrs. Dabney rose at once, with a nervous murmur to her husband, and drew him away, but the others chose to consider that school had not yet begun. Ludlam sprang to pull back her chair, and Willing's ingenuous,

"Oh, why didn't I do that!" roused a shout of laughter. Lucy's blue and rose and brown had a lovely morning freshness above her blue cotton frock, and they all turned to her.

"I was just telling them what a queer thing happened overnight, Miss Cuyler," Palmer Jacks explained. "A white horse has sprung up from the meadow, like Venus out of the foam."

"It looked to me as if it came out of a horsecar," said Willing, so seriously that they laughed again.

"I think it's a poet in disguise, myself," Palmer went on. "But there's no use asking Miss Ware: she just sits there and smiles."

"I don't see why I shouldn't take a horse to

board." Candace protested. "It won't be half so much trouble as the rest of you."

"I'll bet Venus doesn't pay rent," returned Jacks. "You'll pauperize him just as you are pauperizing us. Miss Cuyler, did you know that Miss Ware is doing actual moral harm in the world — that she is undermining our financial independence and weakening our moral fibre by giving us luxuries we can't pay for?"

"Oh, come!" broke in Dana Malone, starting from an abstracted silence. "What rot!"

Lucy had flushed, but she returned Candace's stolen glance with one of amusement. "I shouldn't think a pine cabin could hurt any one's moral fibre," she said.

"Anything for nothing is bad," Palmer insisted. "Some one once gave me five hundred dollars, in a burst of good will — or insanity, perhaps; and, I can tell you, I was pauperized on the spot. I went about for two years trying to find some one else in the same mood. It's a bad job that is being done here on this farm — you mark my words."

"But, if you can't take, you can't give!" Dana was explosive with protest. "You believe in giving, don't you? When I see what this place does for one, every hour — why, it's a big, definite gain in moral fibre to be here. I think Miss Ware — and

the bully old lady back of her — are doing as fine a piece of work as I ever heard of!"

There was a deep murmur of assent from the young Russian and a perfunctory echo from Ludlam, who looked annoyed at having his status at the farm so publicly referred to. Willing also sprang to the defence with a bald:

"If you feel that way, I don't see why you stay!"

Jacks chuckled. "My dear young friends," he said, rising, "there are moments when preserving one's moral fibre is not the first consideration. Miss Cuyler, if you care to see one of these breeding places of pauperism, I shall be charmed to have you inspect my cabin any time."

"I am going to show Miss Cuyler all the cabins this morning, so you'd better have them in order," Candace warned them, and the men, being their own housemaids, left in some haste. Not till they were well down the hill did the two women dare look at each other. Then Lucy broke into a smothered laugh.

"Oh, if they ever found out!" she cried, her face pressed against Candace's shoulder. Then a sobering thought lifted her head. "You don't think there is anything in — what Mr. Jacks said, do you?" she asked anxiously.

"Of course not, and neither does Palmer himself. He was just talking. No: I agree with Dana

Malone, my dear I consider you a bully old lady." Lucy's laughter ran over again, yet she was not wholly reassured.

"I suppose that free homes might do harm," she persisted.

"Yes, they might. You always run that risk when you try to do good. You must watch and judge that for yourself this summer, Lucy."

"But you had been considering the idea for years, hadn't you?"

"Well, I had been feeling sorry for years, wishing that various poor things I knew could get a comfortable chance at the country. I haven't put any deep, economic thought into it, I'm afraid."

Lucy sighed. "Giving is so terribly responsible!"

"Yes; but so is not giving," said Candace mildly.

"Every one does give, at home, enormous sums, for everything." And Lucy sighed again, as though the future lay heavily upon her.

They went down the hill an hour later, and Lucy yearned to live in each of the pine cabins in turn. Realization of what these aromatic little homes must mean to cramped refugees from the city struggle made her glow with the joy of giving. As Dana Malone had said, a rescue was "fun." She was eager to put up more cabins, to make more people utterly happy. Most of the tenants were out, but

they found Mr. Dabney on his knees, planting ferns against his front wall.

"My wife thinks it looks so bare and new," he explained. "Do you suppose they will grow?" His tone was patiently hopeless, and Candace paused to consider their chances, letting Lucy go in alone to Mrs. Dabney, who always sat indoors, no matter what lure the day outside might offer. She was sewing, and gathered up the white breadths of her work with nervous apology.

"I hate to have any one see the place looking as it does, anyway," she sighed. "But there is no place to put anything. I spend half my time picking up, but it doesn't do any good."

Lucy could see no disorder, and said so. This was the largest of the cabins, boasting a room and a half as well as a fireplace, and the streaming sunlight suffused the fresh pine walls with a golden glow. Casement windows framed broad pictures of rolling green land and blue sky. The desire to move in at once made the visitor exclaim aloud:

"Oh, I do envy you, Mrs. Dabney!"

"It could be very nice," Mrs. Dabney admitted. "But can you imagine building a place with no more closet room than that?" She lowered her voice, with a cautious glance toward the two outside. "A shelf with a curtain and nine hooks — that is positively all. It is so stupidly planned, anyway.

If you have that window open at night, there is a gale on you; and if you close it, you don't get air enough. I spend half the night opening and shutting things."

Lucy was troubled. "Couldn't you arrange a screen?" she suggested.

"Oh, it's hardly worth while to do anything." Mrs. Dabney pressed her thin fingers across her big, white forehead. "Miss Ware wants us to stay all summer, but I don't believe we shall. I hate living with my trunk in the room — but it is full of our things. As I tell Mr. Dabney, I shall be more tired by trying to keep picked up than rested by the outing. I hope you will come again," she added, as Lucy rose. "The days are so long in a place like this."

Lucy could scarcely contain her protest until they were out of earshot.

"Candy, she does nothing but complain!" She was hurt as well as indignant. "It is a darling place, and she can't talk of anything but closets. Do let her go, and give it to some one who will get the good of it."

Candace's smile had never been more lazily tolerant. "She's getting the good of it, child. She has gained five pounds at least since she came, and her voice has gone down two keys."

"But she isn't appreciative ——"

"Ho! You're thinking of gratitude, are you? Enjoy that when it comes, little Lucy, but don't concern yourself about it when it doesn't. You do such things because you think they're needed: thanks don't alter the results."

"But — but — no, I think it is a failure, Candy, when a person takes it like that. She ought to pay rent, that woman! I should make her."

"Well, this tenant is appreciative, anyway," said Candace soothingly as they turned into the path that led to Dana Malone's hidden dwelling.

Dana had swept and ordered his cabin in a glory of zeal. The joy of the present had suddenly submerged the cold dismay to which he had wakened. It was warm, bright June and she was coming: that was enough for the hour. His bed became a couch, by day, and a green burlap screen hid the washstand: the rest was rough pine beams and casement windows opening widely into the woods, and a bare stick or two of furniture, too unobtrusive to take away from the wildwood charm of the little place. When all was in order, Dana brought in lavish armfuls of ferns and pine boughs, fastening them up against the walls, and dug up a great, flat white stone to serve as a doorstep to her feet. He would have brought in the whole woodland for her had she not ended his labours by coming.

She paused on the new doorstone with a surprised,

"Oh! Oh, lovely!" that brought Candace up beside her.

"Well, Dana! You look like the ice-cream booth at the county fair," the latter said admiringly.

"More like Peter Pan's cottage," said the kindly Lucy. "Aren't we interrupting your work?" His protest was cut short by Candice's emphatic:

"I'm glad we did interrupt it. You will find those young pine trees on your board bill next Saturday."

"Oh, come! I only took branches that didn't show," he declared joyously. "Won't you both sit down and visit me? I never before was a real host, in a home of my own. It's a tremendous feeling. Miss Cuyler, are you, here in the East, born just yearning to entertain, as we are in California?"

"I don't know." Lucy's honesty was reluctant. "I always think of it myself as something rather worrying and responsible."

"Oh, I don't. It's the dream of my life to come out into my own front hall in a big white waistcoat and welcome a lot of splendid people who've come to dinner!" He laughed, tilting back on the piano stool with a knee in his clasped hands.

"And you'd show them all over the house," Candace derided him.

"Oh, yes — the new bathrooms and the old mahogany and the — O Candy, how could you

help it?" he pleaded. "Think what it would mean! By jinks!"

"Well, if you want to begin on the mahogany, there is actually some left, about here," Candace suggested. "The collectors haven't found it all out, for some reason. I got that old sideboard — did you notice it, Lucy? — from a farm over here a little way, and they had a lovely table — possibly other things."

"Were they expensive?" Lucy asked with interest.

"Dirt cheap, a month ago. But the people may have learned better by this time. Or been cleaned out. Play something for us, Dana — something of your own."

He turned readily about, and it was then, with his face bent over the keys, that Lucy Cuyler really saw him for the first time. Her eyes kept returning to him with a sense of startled discovery. It was not a handsome face, yet about the idealistic brows, the irregular, jutting chin and wide, thin-lipped mouth touched with sweetness at the corners, she found a latent nobility that was very close to beauty — that really was beauty, she decided, with a consciousness of caught breath, when, at the end, he looked across to her with a smile. She had scarcely heard what he played, but the response in her face satisfied him. Dana took his music very simply. He knew, without vanity, that it

was good, and loved it frankly, but exacted nothing from others.

"You'll like this, too," he said, and this time Lucy heard, a haunted, Celtic melody full of ghosts and dreams. "I got that from something my Grandfather Malone used to play to me on his violin, when I was a kid," he explained. "He called it 'Mary Alone.' He'd have been a great musician if he had ever had a chance." He would have risen, but Lucy begged for it again. There was an eerie call running through it that set her heart beating: she waited for its repetitions with thirsty eagerness, and heard it end each time with a sad sense that she could never have enough of it. It called and called her until the cabin was as rich in glamour as the garden of her secret girlhood. Oh, the longing of it, the weird pain of its moonlit cry!

"Dana, if you play that insane thing again, I shall howl like a lost dog," exclaimed Candace, rising. "Thank you for your hospitality. You will make a perfectly good host when the time comes. Lucy, do you want to come back to the house? You have seen all the cabins."

Lucy roused herself to the practical present with a faint sigh. "Can't we go and look at that woman's old furniture?" she asked. Candace consulted her watch.

"I don't dare. The girls will be here in less than an hour. But I could tell you how to go."

"Let me show her;" Dana had started up. "I know: it's the Barrow farm, where you get your eggs. May I, Miss Cuyler — do you mind?" Lucy, with a smile, did not "mind," and Candace went serenely back to her duties, not dreaming that she left behind her anything more interesting or dangerous than the pursuit of old furniture.

Lucy would have turned shy without Candace's protecting presence, but Dana's absolute ease seemed to bestow on her some of his freedom of spirit. For he was never free and easy — there was nothing to repel: he was simply incapable of understanding the involuntary barriers that may hamper willing spirits. The happiness of the present was still overflowing in his voice and gait and his solicitous care for her as they followed a path through the woods.

"I'm glad you liked that Celtic thing," he began. "I have some others that I must play for you. I got them all from my grandfather — hints of them, you know, and the words — so I am going to publish them under his name, Brian Malone."

"That is very generous," said Lucy, and something in her secretly added, "and just what you would do!" with an intensity that brought a glow to her face.

"Oh, it's a better name for the songs, anyway," he demurred. "My name is a half-breed. The Malones were coming up in the world as the Danas were coming down, so they met, you see. I'd change my name to Brian, only — well, my mother did care such a lot about the Danas!" with a laugh of comprehending affection.

"Oh, and doesn't it matter what they cared about — afterward!" It was a momentous burst of confidence from Lucy. "At the time you don't think much about it: you want to do your own way. But when they are ——"

He nodded understandingly. "Yes; then you don't see how you could have gone against them so brutally, every chance you had."

"And so you try to be more what they wanted," she took it up. "My mother cared so about committees and board meetings and charities" — the path had brought them up against a rail fence, and Lucy leaned on the bars, looking out across the open fields with misty eyes — "and I never even really listened when she wanted to tell me about them. I never asked questions or went with her of my own accord. Never, once." She had told the aching secret of her life to an absolute stranger; and yet she was conscious only that the moment was, for some reason, big. Dana's arms rested beside hers on the fence rail, his eyes, touched and respon-

sive, followed hers to the shining clouds of the far horizon.

"Don't you think they understand — fathers and mothers?" he urged. "Don't you suppose they remember how they went against their own parents, and then broke their hearts over it? Perhaps that is why they were so everlastingly patient and forgiving: they knew how it was all going to wrench us, some day, and that then we'd at least remember what they wanted. I think they knew!"

"Do you?" The tremulous hope in her voice wrung him. "If I could only be sure of that!"

"Well, just think back;" he was burning to help her. "Can't you remember, when you were awfully cussed and trying, how, suddenly, they would stop being furious, and just give you the sorriest kind of smile, a sort of, 'Oh, you poor child!' look? That was it: they were remembering, and realizing how you'd pay in your turn. Oh, of course they knew!"

Lucy stood transfixed before a memory, her last memory of her mother able-bodied and active, though perhaps the softening of the end had already touched her militant spirit; for, before Lucy's open reluctance to accept a charitable secretaryship, she had laid her large, strong hand on her daughter's shoulder with a tolerant smile. "Never mind, dear, the time will come," she had said. Until this moment, that memory had been a piercing pain:

now she saw it lightened of its reproach, transfused with a beauty of meaning before which her hurt spirit rose up like the healed Lazarus.

"Oh, I didn't dream" — she murmured; "I didn't dream ——" She forgot to go on, and Dana waited patiently beside her, motionless lest he disturb the big thoughts reflected in her rapt face.

A thrush sang, suddenly, over their heads, clearing the air like a silver shower. They looked up, smiling, to find him. Dana boyishly vaulted the bars before letting them down for her; he had to do something with his brimming vitality. The glistening pillars of cloud on the far horizon had begun to show black on their under sides, and a breeze of mischievous meaning came dipping over the young wheat.

"Shower," he announced joyously, and she laughed as at good news.

"We must hurry," she said.

The track along the edge of the wheat sloped temptingly before them. Neither knew which began to run first: perhaps the spirit in their feet ran away with both at once. They flew at top speed, miraculously without labour: it was like flight in dreams, when one skims the grass tops, high breasted and arms streaming. A prosaic ending loomed ahead in a stile and a public highway, but,

before they had slackened, Lucy's ankle faltered, and she stumbled wildly forward.

As though his arms had been waiting for this moment, Dana caught her, caught her up, warm and panting, in a clasp that was like a shout of joy. She was instantly freed: not a finger pressure did she need for her release, there was not even time for a thought of escape. Yet she had been there, in his arms, and they both knew it in every fibre as she laughed over the accident, and assured him she was not hurt, and steadied her loosened hair. She crossed the stile with great decorum, even with formality, as though to atone for that outburst of youth, and Dana saw again his young Queen and the throne. He did not offer her even the tips of his fingers.

The Barrow farm lay just across the highway, a dreary, unkempt place, overrun with chickens. The fine old white-pillared house was rotting with neglect, the barns sagged threateningly, the yard they crossed was strewn with rubbish. The Barrows had gone down in the world. A slatternly figure of discouraged middle age opened the back door to them and heard their request with apathetic eyes.

"There's a table in there," she admitted. "You can go look at it if you like." Beyond a nod toward a door, she did not offer to show them the way.

They crossed a broad hall, of beautiful proportions, but unspeakably dirty and airless, and opened the door of a big room that must have been handsome in its day, but was squalid and stained now, bare but for a table in the centre and nearly dark because of the grime on the window-panes. Dana, shuddering, tried to let in some fresh air, but the windows were nailed fast. Lucy had turned eagerly to the table.

"O Mr. Malone!" she cried, excited, but cautious. "It is one of the old hundred-legged tables! Why, they are rare, aren't they?"

"So it is," he exclaimed, bending down to examine the many slender, fluted legs that supported the broad leaves of the top. "And it is in pretty good order, too. What a find!" He discovered a rag and rubbed away some of the dust, and they rejoiced over it until Lucy was seized by a panic fear that another purchaser might even now be at the door, and hurried him back to the kitchen. The question of price was always dreadful to her, and she met it with a quaint mixture of sternness and timidity, nerved by the blood of old Adrian Cuyler even while Great Aunt Betty's softness would have begged off.

"I like the table, Mrs. Barrow," she said. "What did you — what will you sell it for?"

The woman was patching a man's shoe, tugging painfully as the needle stuck in the heavy leather.

"There's a kind of demand for them things now," she said wearily. "We had a lot once—I wisht we'd kep' 'em. I'll have to ask you nine dollars."

Dana gasped audibly, but Lucy met the price with a grave little nod.

"Will that include boxing it for shipping?" she asked.

"We couldn't box it very well; but he'll deliver it anywheres about here." She was dully anxious not to lose the sale. Lucy appeared to debate before conceding the point.

"Very well. If your husband will bring it up to Miss Ware's, I will give him the money: nine dollars." For the first time, the woman showed a spark of human feeling. Her hands paused, and she lifted her head.

"No: you pay me," she said sternly. "Bring it when you like; but you give it to *me*." The closing of her lips told bitter truths. Then the spark died out and she went on doggedly stabbing the needle through the harsh leather.

They got away with a sense of escape, breathing deep the clean June air, feeling as if their garments and hands still held the smell of stale poverty. Lucy would have been gay over her bargain, but Dana was unresponsive, and his face was so downcast that she fell silent, wondering. When he turned to help her over the stile, their eyes met.

"You think it *is* a good table, don't you?" she asked, timid again before his change of mood.

"That's just it!" He rested an elbow on the top step, facing her eagerly, yet breathing nervously with the difficulty of explaining. "You don't know, of course; but down in New York I'm always prowling about the antique shops, and I know that a table like that, put in order, would sell for seventy or eighty dollars, easily — more on Fifth Avenue."

"Yes?" Her clear eyes showed only puzzled question, and his colour rose.

"Don't you see? Any dealer would give her twenty dollars or even twenty-five like a shot if she knew enough to ask it. And she's so horribly poor! You couldn't be expected to know about prices;" his voice caressed her; "but I do, and I was wondering if you wouldn't let me — oh, you know, suppose I bought half of it, and we gave her twenty dollars? I could perfectly well — don't hate me! Only she's so horribly poor!"

Her eyes were still lifted, but they looked strained and frightened, and the colour was rushing to her very hair. He could not know that Lucy, lover of every aspect of beauty, and so open at that moment to new influence that the voices of the past in her were feeble — that Lucy, ashamed, and yet moved beyond minding her shame, was in spirit swept to

her knees before him. He struck the step with a desperate fist.

"I'm a fool, I'm a fool," he muttered.

"Oh, you are right!" He saw rather than heard the choked whisper. "You are beautifully right! I'll do it — not you — I will pay her well. Oh, I am so glad you said that!" The last words were audible, and brought her hands into his.

"You're so lovely," he stammered.

"I hadn't — realized ——"

"No, of course not — you couldn't! But I had to say it ——"

"I am so glad you ——"

A splash of water in their faces brought them back to earth with a shock that ended in startled laughter. The shower was close upon them. They hurried up the hill and dived, breathless, into the shelter of the woods just in time to escape drenching. The path was still dry, but the rush of rain over their green roof showed that it would not stay dry long. They were both thinking of the broad sweep of open meadow between Lacy and the house. Presently Dana hurried ahead to plunge into his cabin, coming out with an old raincoat over his shoulders.

"You wait in there," he commanded, as imperiously as he had ordered her away from the carriage, at first sight. "I'm going up to get your things."

"But if I took the coat ——" she began. The

idea of that old rubber garment touching her was impossible to him.

"Oh, no;" with a quick frown. "Besides, you must have rubbers and an umbrella. I won't be long."

He wasted no time waiting for her consent, and Lucy, warned by a cold splash on her thin sleeve, stepped into the cabin. She was glad to be by herself for a moment, to catch her breath spiritually as well as bodily. Yet she did not succeed very well. The little green-bowered place was still echoing to her of "Mary Alone." All the warm, stirring experiences of the morning came back to her set to that longing call. She sat with her head in her hands, her ears so filled by inner voices that she did not hear a light step running along the path, and started violently as some one came through the open door with a jump.

Ludlam also started, but quickly recovered himself.

"Ah, Miss Cuyler! So you are a refugee, too?" he exclaimed, setting a large canvas carefully against the wall. "Where is our host?"

"He has very kindly gone up to the house for my things;" Lucy spoke with a gentle formality that, for some unrecognized reason, kept Ludlam from taking a seat. He leaned gracefully against the doorpost.

"What a lot of real sacrifice the conventions demand of us," he observed through his smallest smile. "In a simpler world he could have had the great pleasure of sheltering you until the shower had passed."

Lucy decided, quite suddenly, that she did not like this blond man with his glances and his little pointed beard and his long, pointed elbows.

"In a simpler world one might not mind getting wet," she said with a quiet dignity that was wholly Victorian. Ludlam felt her unreasonable. He knew that he had charm, and was irritated when others were too perverse to recognize it. He would waste no more of what he called "Ludlam at his best" on this stiff little person from Massachusetts, but would descend at once to commonplace methods. So he told her what he had meant to reserve for a surprise, a delicate climax to a series of charming effects in conversation.

"Ever since you came, Miss Cuyler, I have been cherishing a wild hope that you might recognize me," he began. He had at least roused her interest: her eyes questioned.

"Have we met?" she asked, as he did not explain.

"Not met, exactly. I was an unknown trespasser stealing a sketch, you were the lady of the manor, who delivered me out of the hands of an angry gardener. It was three summers ago." He

paused hopefully for her recognition, but she looked only politely regretful.

"So many artists have sketched on our point," she apologized. That gave him pause, very much as if she had said that photographers often gathered there. A visible moment for recovery was needed before he went on.

"I simply wanted you to know that I owe to you and your point what many people have considered my best work. The picture was in the Academy two winters ago and made rather a sensation." He was beginning to get back his usual tone. "It is a good thing to shake New York up once in a while — set the critics praising and scolding, and fighting one another. Echoes of it may have reached you."

Lucy's vague murmur might have been taken for assent had it not stood so much more plainly for inattention. Ludlam's vanity was not of the dull kind. He withdrew into a bored silence, which lasted until the touch of a fern on his ear drew his glance to the walls. Their carefully massed greenery brought a startled frown. He had tactfully absented himself when his own cabin was visited that morning, but he had first strewn it with interesting sketches, and had brought up from the bottom of his trunk various volumes of distinction — Verlaine, St. Francis, Walter Pater — which he threw on

table and couch. Obviously, this wild Westerner had also been moved to decorate for his guest; and had done it with a crude openness that should have offended a girl of sensitive perceptions. Obviously, too, Lucy Cuyler's position in the world was not the secret up here that he had imagined it. The rawness of the performance made him shiver disgustedly.

"Malone seems to have passed a busy morning," he observed. "I feel very remiss; I should at least have put 'Welcome' over my door." He could not tell whether she ignored or quite missed the covert derision of his tone.

"I thought yours looked very charming," she said simply.

"If you like this sort of thing;" he shrugged expressively. "The sylvan does not appeal to me. You know, I am above all things urban. You may think that strange, considering the character of my work; but it is true." In the joy of self-expression, he articulated more and more beautifully; his teeth were slightly bared, as though to bite the words off more neatly. "It comes from what I sometimes call my duality. As a painter, I get everything from nature; but, the moment my work is done, the man Ludlam asserts himself and demands civilization. Frankly, Miss Cuyler, don't you find this life here a hideous bore?"

"You find it so?"

"Oh, depressing beyond words! One makes use of the place. It is here, it saves money — I quite frankly find that desirable, just at this moment. It does well enough. But the people aren't exactly our sort — you must admit that. One feels kindly, of course; but a girl like you can't find it satisfying."

"I should scarcely stay if I did not." Lucy spoke indifferently, but for a second time that morning she was hot with protest. Her gift was being exploited, used with contempt: for a second time she saw it as a failure.

"Oh, 'stay'! One stays because it is easy. But when I hear raptures over it ——"

Through the open window Lucy saw Dana coming, and started up with a relief that was unconsciously frank.

"Here are my things," she exclaimed. "O Mr. Malcae, you are drenched! I am so sorry."

Dana shook the water from his hair with a laugh.

"It doesn't matter. Oh, hello, Ludlam!" His voice changed as he saw the other man, but he was too innately hospitable to remember prejudices under his own roof-tree. "Make yourself comfortable. Now, Miss Cuyler!" He knelt and put on her overshoes, then, after holding her raincoat for her, opened the near-silk umbrella with the cherries on the handle. Lucy sensitively glanced up to see

if he were scorning it; then dropped her eyes with a quickened colour, the look she met was so little akin to scorn. He kept the umbrella in his own hand. "I'll take you home," he said.

She protested, would not hear of it, but Dana simply waited for her to come, smiling instead of arguing, and she went off outwardly annoyed at his obstinacy, inwardly rejoicing in his strength. They had both forgotten Ludlam, who looked after them from the window with a smile that was very small indeed.

The rest of that day had a curious quality for Lucy. A bright haze seemed to lie between her and all reality, and only by determined effort could she keep her eyes clear and her ears open. The moment she was alone, it rolled about her until she sat fixed in the centre of a shining web, motionless, uncurious, and marvellously glad. Conscientious habit drove her down to the others, and her surface self gave and took impressions just as usual; yet she felt as if her soul had sent forth her body to do its work, while it remained aloof, busied with its own glorious affairs.

The rain soon passed over, and the old farmhouse opened to let out a stream of girls. They spread down the sunny meadows with laughter and cries of delight and little aimless runs, and an auburn-haired young woman was promptly mounted on

the white horse. They all knew one another, and to Lucy their comradely ease was a little terrifying. Though several had reached her own twenty-three years and two were distinctly older, they seemed to have kept a schoolgirl quality that she had never known. Her impulsive first thought was that she did not like them; then she told herself that that was not "big," and set out with a reflection of Great Aunt Betty's shy loveliness in her face to make friends. They met her cordially, considered her "perfectly sweet," and presently forgot all about her in the excitement of organizing a game of base-ball. She slipped away unnoticed.

The strange glamour rolled up about her again as soon as she was free of them. She wandered vaguely about the fields, climbing little hills and sitting down beside running water, utterly happy and unquestioning. The smell of sweet fern was destined to stir her heart for years to come, because she held a piece of it in her hand all that dream-haunted afternoon.

Dinner had been a pleasant occasion to Lucy the night before, but to-night she felt herself swamped in numbers, and ate in shy silence. At her first glance toward the other end of the table she met Dana Malone's dark gaze, and did not dare look that way again. As soon as the meal was done, she escaped to her room; yet some veiled

instinct told her that the day was not over for her.

The cloudless western sky, rising from still white depths of luminous pearl through the dawning green of curling sea-waves to a frail echo of some far-off flush, drew her to the window and held her there on her knees. Beauty was to her a mighty voice, never heard without an awed response. The cares that infested her town days had shrivelled away like coarse outer petals no longer needed: she felt herself expanding into something white and lovely and fragrant, floating on the vast, still pool of night.

She had come upstairs trembling before a dim consciousness that something was happening. She tried to explain the sudden rush of happiness by its obvious causes: it was blessed to be with Candace and to catch a little of her amazing ease in human relations by sheer wonder at it; it was interesting to meet a new world and make new friends; it was beyond everything good to be free of ordeals, with beauty for her daily companion and the effort to reproduce it her only task. Yet there was more. Some new wine was distilled in this high air, some stirring, opening quality that lay like a glint of gold dust over all her surroundings and gave her a magic sense of impending joy. The namable satisfactions were forgotten, or, rather, fused into a great, wordless jubilation as she knelt before the wide night.

All her fresh young soul strained up and up to meet its benediction.

A sound brought her back to earth, but so gently, so graciously, she was scarcely conscious of the return. The woodland below took on a voice, and a faint echo of "Mary Alone" rose from its shadow. No building was to be seen from Lucy's window, but the mouth of the path leading to Dana's cabin could be made out at the wood's edge. It was a composer's touch on the piano, not technically masterful, but warm, intimate, creative. Again and again the longing strain drew itself out just beyond reach: soft pedal or distance kept it tantalizingly blurred. The need to hear it wholly and satisfyingly drew Lucy like thirst, first down to the deserted side porch, then down the hill to the edge of the woodland, then, a step at a time, along the dark tunnel of the path that led to the cabin. She did not smile over the adventure, there was no mischief in her silent approach. Something stronger than music was drawing her. In all her cool, quiet girlhood she had never before heard that summons, and now, hearing it suddenly at full strength, though without a glimmer of understanding, she obeyed it as simply as wise men follow a star.

Dana, in his unlighted cabin, was playing to her, consciously calling and calling her through the recurring strain, letting its lonely plaint grow to

hunger and appeal, and finally rise to a bolder cry, before which Lucy woke with a frightened start and fled noiselessly away. After that Dana sat for a long time with his arms crossed on the music-rest and his forehead pressed against them. For, through the open window, he had seen the gleam of her white gown.

CHAPTER THREE

No earthly power could stop it. Lucy might withdraw behind her shyness, spend her days working with the busy class, keep her eyes on her plate at dinner, Dana might prostrate himself nightly before the grim facts of his hopeless poverty and his general unworthiness; yet the stolen tide swept steadily on until "all the world was in the sea," and not fright nor honour nor any mortal barrier could keep their eyes from leaping together when they met. After that, Lucy took to wandering away from the class; and, as she was a privileged pupil, the absorbed Candace never thought of questioning her. There was no understanding, spoken or tacit, with Dana Malone, and yet, the first time she deserted the earnest colony of camp stools, within five minutes she had come upon him, leaning over the rail of a little bridge. The radiance of his unspoken welcome drove her to a hasty refuge in words.

"I ran away from work," she explained.

"So did I. How can one work!" The exclamation acknowledged so much that again Lucy scrambled to shelter.

"What are you working at?" she asked, dropping pebbles upon her reflection in the pool below.

"I'll tell you some time. Please don't — you make me feel as if some one were hitting you in the face."

She laughed, and tossed a pebble that shattered his image.

"Now some one is hitting you in the face," she said. "How does an Irishman take that?"

"Ah, if it's a lady, he begs her to keep right on!"

Lucy, of course, desisted. Presently the two images were looking gravely up at them again from the stilled pool.

"I think we ought to introduce them," she observed. "To be in such a little pool together and not know each other must be awkward, don't you think?"

"But we weren't introduced until hours after we met. Suppose some one had dropped into that road and said, 'Mr. Malone, Miss Cuyler' — oh, it wouldn't have been half so wonderful. Let them find each other out." Their eyes met, laughing acknowledgment of the deliciousness of "fooling."

"We will come here to-morrow and see how they are getting on," she said. "Then, if they seem stiff or embarrassed, we can help them out."

"They won't be stiff after twenty-four hours of June," he assured her, stretching out his arms as

though to take in all the day's loveliness. "I think, if you don't mind, Miss Cuyler, we'd better knock on the bridge to-morrow before we look over."

It was hard to keep a straight face, but Lucy achieved it. "I don't see why," she said.

"No, I don't either," he amended, so hastily that the lady in the pool would have shown a tiny crescent moon risen in either cheek had the light been strong enough. "Did you hear about our young Russian friend?" he added, penitently eager for a safe topic.

"No — what?"

"He lit out this morning without a word to any one — packed his dishes and went home. Miss Ware has found out that he took the early train for town, so she isn't worried about him. But it was a cool performance, wasn't it!" He was surprised at the feeling Lucy showed. Her eyes quite flashed.

"I think it was abominable," she exclaimed. "How can people be so — so unappreciative! He might at least have said good-bye." She turned away from the pool as though its charm were broken for her. "I wonder if you really can help people!"

"I tried to make friends with him," Dana explained as they left the road, taking a path that wound steeply up through the woods. "But he

was a queer, dismal chap, and he had so little English. I couldn't get anywhere."

"No; but I am thinking of these cabins." Lucy was mounting with an energy that was still indignant. "They were meant — evidently — to make people so very happy; and they seem such a failure. No one really —— "

"They have made one man very happy," Dana interrupted, holding out his hand to help her up a steep pitch. Lucy caught the stem of a sapling and drew herself up unaided.

"Yes, Mr. Willing," she admitted. Her grievance had suddenly evaporated, and her eyes were full of laughter.

"Oh, Willing would be happy anyway. That is 'his luck.' "

"You would, too, wouldn't you? Aren't you a happy person?"

"At this minute, yes."

"No, but usually?"

"I have been — or thought I was. I didn't know what they really were — happiness and unhappiness — till I came here." His hand went out again, and though the path was easy enough at the moment, hers sprang to meet it. With that soft treasure in his possession, Dana forgot everything: he stood holding it in both hands against his coat as he might have held a frightened, throb-

bing bird. The instant it struggled, he opened his hands and let it dart away. They went on in silence, Lucy springing ahead. Presently the woods ended, bringing them out on a stony hilltop, crowned with an aged, weather-beaten oak. They sat down in its shade, their eyes, grave enough now, following the contours of the big, rolling land before them.

"I'll tell you now what I am doing," Dana began, leaning back on one elbow. "I can write music, you know. I mean, I'm trained: I'm not an amateur. There was a mislaid genuis who lived next to us, at home, when I was little — heavens, but that man had gift! His music was light, too, and popular: his waltzes waltzed and his polkas polked and his songs sang — warm, good melody, easily understood, but never cheap or thin. Poor old Sam Bynner! He ought to be a millionaire with three shows going on Broadway, and instead he's an obscure music teacher with a sick wife and no money and no chance. He took me in hand when I was a small boy and taught me for love: I worked with him, off and on, for over seventeen years. He taught me things that I should have been half my life fumbling out, without him. And he *knew*. I am telling you this so that you will know I'm well grounded: that it isn't presumptuous of me to try a big thing.

"Well, do you remember the Children's Crusade, back in the early part of the thirteenth century?

That is my theme. A boy had a vision: Christ appeared to him and told him to gather all the children and make a crusade to the Holy Land. The boy obeyed, and thirty thousand children set out — and there, with all their joy and marching courage, you hear the motive of the mothers who let them go" — he hummed a strain — "I can't give you any idea of it, of course. It's a wail, but submissive. Can't you see them streaming over a hilltop, the thirty thousand, with banners? I have kept the child quality in it all through, a note of bright innocence, though I suppose they were little devils, all right, those thirteenth-century boys! Well, you remember what happened. The vision had said that the sea would dry and let them cross, but, when they came to the Mediterranean, naturally, it didn't. They were footsore and worn out and broken by this time — you get a frightened-children quality, and the mother theme comes in. Then the treacherous merchants offer to take them over free, for the sake of the cause, and they embark; and then all who aren't lost in the storm are sold into slavery. But the boy who had the vision — this isn't quite history, but never mind — he escapes from slavery, and at last gets to the Holy Sepulchre, all alone — crawls there, dying. You hear the mother theme again, horribly sad, this time. Then the vision music comes in against it, overcomes it:

Christ appears in glory and accepts the crusade from this one boy as from them all, and the children's voices are heard, ghostly at first, but presently in streaming triumph. Ah, I wish you could hear the violins on that as I hear them! Telling it makes it sound like an imitation of Tannhauser, but it is so totally different, musically; the whole conception and treatment is of another era. And the spring youngness of it! Oh, I wish I could play it to you! Only it needs a whole orchestra, of course. Do you like it?" He scarcely needed her answer, her face was so lighted.

"Oh, I love it!"

"I am so glad! It isn't literal, of course. I hate these tone poems that make the waves dash and the horses gallop: you won't have to follow any fine print on the programme. It will simply appear as 'The Children's Crusade Suite.' Those two words, children and crusade, give you the whole thing."

"And when will it be played?" she asked eagerly.

"Who knows? After I'm dead, probably. You usually have to die to get recognized in my profession."

"But Miss Ware says —— "

"Oh, yes, I have been unusually fortunate. I have had songs published, and even sung in concerts. I've been patted on the head, noticed and encour-

aged." A bitter note sounded in his voice, and it was that she answered.

"Well, then —— ?"

He sat up to face her. "Miss Cuyler! Publishing a song means laying it on a counter: if any one wants to go and buy it, they can. If they do, my royalty is six cents. Do you realize what that means to a man without a penny — how many copies he must sell to pay even his carfares? I have been working over this suite for two years, on and off. The mere printing of it will cost hundreds of dollars. What publisher is going to take that risk? But suppose some firm does, and suppose I get it played by good orchestras — what then? If it earns for me eighteen dollars a year, it will be doing exceedingly well. I can't write ragtime or comic opera, and there is absolutely nothing else that pays, for an American. I shall do a lyric opera some day, but nobody will produce it; there is no room, no desire for it. A musician of my class is a beggar for life." He thrust that at her, with all it meant; and his heart nearly broke at seeing her so undisturbed.

"But how do you live now?" she asked.

"I do musical reporting for a daily and a weekly, and I have some pupils, as few as possible. I earn about twenty-seven dollars a week. And I am one of the fortunate ones!" He dropped his head on his arms with a despairing sigh. "I never cared

before. The joy of the work was reward enough; I thought I was willing to pay the price. But now" – his voice became almost inaudible — "I think perhaps it's too horrible."

Lucy's eyes were on his rough head, smiling wonderfully, but she said nothing. Her serene cheerfulness on the way home left Dana in utter desolation. She did not care whether he could marry a wife or not. He was a fool, a fool, a fool. He shut himself into his cabin all the afternoon, and worked as though that were the one thing on earth left to him.

They always met at the bridge and went up the same steep path through the woods, and that was why, for so long, no one saw them; the stony hilltop offered nothing to painters. Candace made fun of Lucy's laziness, but on the whole approved of it. She was always pleased when Lucy showed signs of not living entirely according to the dictates of conscience. Idleness was agreeing with the girl. She blossomed visibly before them, showing them a daily loveliness of colour and spirit that made them all turn to her — Palmer Jacks with a shrewd, questioning twinkle, little Willing with round-eyed adoration, Ludlam with quickened energies. To Ludlam, the girl behind the fortune was beginning to emerge, to take on personality, and though his preference was for fine ladies in trailing gowns with bored, sophisticated eyes and worldly backgrounds,

he recognized that this youthful heiress had her own type of aristocracy as well as a very tangible charm. And no doubt she would pick up smartness if she lived in New York. So he dropped the aloofness with which he had been punishing her since their encounter in Dana's cabin, breaking his silence with a woodland offering. Lucy, friendly now to all the world, accepted the cluster of wild strawberries with encouraging cordiality, and was sharing them with him when Palmer Jacks appeared. Jacks passed on into the living-room where Candace happened to be alone, and something in his expression made her ask:

"What's the matter, Palmer?"

"Oh, nothing." He rubbed his hand over forehead and eyes, as though to obliterate the look. "That's a mighty nice little girl out there, Candy," he added, with a nod toward the veranda. "She has a fairly level head, hasn't she?"

"I think so. Why?"

"Doesn't any one need it? Especially a girl who isn't poor, I understand."

"Yes, Lucy isn't poor."

"So Ludlam told me;" Palmer spoke with significance. "I like Ludlam well enough; he's a clever chap. But it wouldn't be very safe to hurt his vanity. He might get even."

"You don't think Lucy is going to hurt it, do you?"

"She is very likely to, if he takes it into his head to fall in love with her."

"O Palmer, be still!" Candace spoke with affectionate impatience. "Nobody is going to fall in love with anybody. I can't be bothered with it."

"Oh, ho! They're not, eh? What will you bet?"

"I'll bet that any one who does goes back by the next train."

His handsome, ruddy face looked humorously wise. "Gad! You'll have to charter a special," he observed; but Candace would not listen to him.

"When a girl is as truly indifferent to men as Lucy is —— " she began.

"Pshaw!" he interrupted. "There isn't a woman living who is indifferent to men. Don't talk that to me. I move we break up this tête-á-tête, myself."

He strolled back to the door, and Lucy welcomed him with a cordiality that betrayed a touch of relief. This Mr. Ludlam had an inexplicable way of getting on one's nerves.

"Do you know birds, Mr. Jacks?" she began.

"I know a few down on Broadway," Palmer murmured for Candace's benefit. "What is it, Miss Cuyler? I can tell a humming-bird from a rooster, if that is what you mean."

"Miss Cuyler is so optimistic," Ludlam explained in his soft drawl. "If a paint rag blows into a tree, she sees a scarlet tanager."

"But it was a bird — all red on the underside," Lucy insisted.

"All red on the inside is the way I know them best," said Palmer, settling himself comfortably against the doorpost. "No, Miss Cuyler, I have rather a prejudice against birds at large. When I was young I was deeply smitten with a young lady, and we used to walk in the woods. And whenever I grew particularly interesting and fluent, or was leading a story up to some fine climax, she would break in with, 'Oh, wait just a moment — there's a yellow-hammered bill-sticker!' or something to that effect. And then we'd have to stand gawping up till she got a good view of it. It was awful. I look on the birds as the real cause of my single and solitary life."

Lucy was laughing, but Ludlam was annoyed. The interruption seemed to him tactless, even a breach of good faith, considering how much he had tacitly confided to Jacks when he told him of Lucy's position in the world.

"I suspect that in your heart you are grateful to them," said Candace amusedly from behind the screen door.

"Not I. By the way, Candy," Palmer went on, moved by an unfortunate impulse to extend the teasing of Ludlam, who hated any reference to their free quarters, "I have a new scheme of charita-

ble graft for you. Put it up to your backer that there is no use providing us with roofs in summer, only to leave us unsheltered in the rigours of a New York winter. I shouldn't wonder if you could work her for apartments all round."

There was an awkward pause, though Palmer was happily unaware of its significance. Lucy's eyes were on a leaf she was pulling to bits.

"Why call it graft?" Candace asked with her unfailing good humour. "These cottages are given freely and openly; why pretend that you get them by crookedness?"

"Exactly!" muttered Ludlam irritably.

"Because, my dear woman, something for nothing leads to crookedness." Jacks was twinkling wickedly, though he was careful not to look at his victim. "Now I am an able-bodied man; so is Ludlam. We could tide over our times of financial depression by driving cabs or selling theatre tickets, while there would be a fine living for either of us in directing ladies three aisles over to the left and explaining that the lingerie blouses are on the third floor. But if we can get housed for nothing, do you think we are going to provide for ourselves? Not much! Every day I stay here makes me more averse to the idea of rent. It's beginning to seem an imposition to me. It's like getting the dead-head habit in theatre-

going: you never again can pay out good money for a ticket."

"But, Mr. Jacks" — Lucy spoke with difficulty, deepened colour in her cheeks — "if you can't help artists, serious artists who are doing good work, whom can you help?"

"W-e-ll," Jacks considered, "I should say that any one under five years of age or over seventy-five could receive financial aid without injury to the character. But I want it understood, Candy," he added hastily, "that my character is so far gone, no further aid can damage it. And I dare say the same is true of Ludlam. So if you do see your way to a free apartment house —— "

"Dinner is coming on the table," said Candace with relief. She had no wish to shield Lucy from any aspect of a philanthropic undertaking, but judged that the dose had been enough for one night.

The flush lingered in Lucy's face. She had given the thousands necessary to Candace's scheme with impulsive generosity, and half her anticipation of the summer's happiness had lain in the prospect of seeing difficult lives gladdened under her eyes. She had not dreamed of meeting anything sordid and ugly. Mr. Jacks spoke half in jest, of course; yet there was truth in his tirades. Mrs. Dabney's complaints and Adamovitch's ungracious flight, Ludlam's contemptuous admission that he made

use of the place, all lent their dingy colour to that dark word, graft. Willing seemed to take the gift in the expected spirit, and Dana Malone — but, at Dana Malone, Lucy's thoughts broke up, leaving only a confused radiance. She stole a glance at his rugged face, and, seeing it rather sad, could not resist sending a little smile to cheer it. The quick, glorifying smile that answered caught at her breath like a sudden embrace. She dared not look toward that response again; but, all the evening, she saw nothing else.

It was inevitable that the morning meetings at the bridge should be discovered; and the discoverer, unfortunately, was Ludlam. He had brought Lucy further offerings of fruit and flowers, and had supposed that he was making rapid progress; for the heiress smiled on him so pleasantly, no one could have suspected how little she heard of his abundant conversation. He was in a high state of complacence, and was mentally designing and decorating the studio of his affluent future at the very moment when a turn of the road along which he was strolling brought his dreams to an end. Lucy and Dana were leaning over the rail of the little bridge, and, though their images in the pool beneath were still looking up in unbroken propriety, no jealous watcher could miss the meaning of the scene. Their at-homeness together, in contrast to the formal courtesy of

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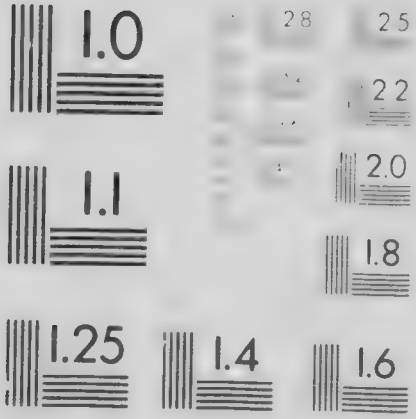

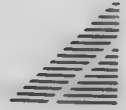

their public meeting stung Ludlam with a sense of having been made a fool of. He was not in love with her, and, in sight of their abounding happiness, he might have forgiven; but, though he had a sensitive appreciation of beauty in art or nature, he had been left stone-blind to beauty of action. For several days he watched, seeing always the same meeting. Then, one shining morning, when Lucy came running out, half an hour after the class had gone forth, she found him sketching on the broad slope just below the veranda.

"Will you see if you like this, Miss Cuyler?" he asked with his flattering deference.

The sketch, rough though it was, had wonderfully caught the relation here between the mighty arch of the sky and the land it encompassed: heaven was truly the throne and the earth its footstool. Lucy's thrilled enthusiasm might have softened him if he had had any doubts about the value of his work.

"So good of you," he said, touching the canvas with swift, sure strokes. "I think I shall make something out of it. This is only a preliminary study, of course. Would you mind sitting down for a moment? I want you to look at it when it is further along."

Lucy, already late, was in a fever to be off. But there was no ostensible errand to call her; she had

come out without even a paint brush that might serve as an excuse. So she reluctantly sat down, and called silent messages of reassurance to Dana, waiting far below at the bridge.

"I should think it would try you to have people about when you are working," her impatience goaded her into saying. "I can't bear it when I am trying to sketch."

"We have to get used to that," he assured her, and the grace with which he sat his stool, the fluent motions of his long arm, betrayed that an audience might not be wholly a penance. "We painters have to get used to a great many difficult things, Miss Cuyler. But it is not so hard a career as a musician's; we at least can hope for fortune as well as fame. As Malone says, a serious musician in this country can scarcely support himself unless he gives the best part of his day to teaching, or has the technique for public performance. And your born composer seldom has this technique."

"It is very hard," said Lucy vaguely, wondering if a moving figure, far below, could be Dana.

"Now, in a few years, I shall be a fairly rich man — for an artist," Ludlam went on; "while Malone is a beggar for life unless he marries for money. As he himself says, that is the only future open to him." He paused, bending close to the canvas for a fine touch, then leaning far back on his stool to

judge the effect. "We were discussing this the night before you came," he added.

It was not literally a lie. Candace, listening to their discussion, had humorously offered a rich wife as a solution, and Dana had laughed a careless assent. Lucy, seated in the grass with her arms about her knees, made no answer at all. Whether she were struck or merely bored, he had no means of knowing. The one sign vouchsafed was that, when he presently let her go, she did not take the direction of the bridge; and this might be merely caution. Yet he knew, instinctively, without signs, that his blow had not wholly missed. He watched her go with a small, vindictive smile behind his eyelids; then, as the morning light was flattening out the landscape, he gathered up his belongings and went down the hill with the stroll of one well satisfied with his morning's work. Across the back of the sketch he wrote the name under which the finished picture was destined to win for him fame and fortune — "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God."

Lucy was first merely repelled; then frightened, then sorely hurt. That she might be "married for her money" was the bugbear that a well-meaning aunt had conscientiously held up to her for the past three years. It always followed a gentle preliminary to the effect that she could not be expected to understand men. The fine gradations of such mar-

riages, the possible mixture of motives and inducements, were all unknown to her: either a man loved, or he coldly, basely, married for money. Against her passionate faith in Dana rose the chilling facts that she had known him only a few weeks, and that she could not be expected to understand men. That Ludlam might have spoken with a motive did not occur to her, and, coming on top of Dana's recognized speeches, the quoted words carried truth. She forgot all about Ludlam before the leaden knowledge of what Dana had publicly admitted, the night before she came. She had innocently supposed that he did not know about her money; but she was only an ignorant girl, with no one to warn or guide her. Perhaps she had been a fool.

She did not go near the bridge, and Dana, whose impatience had taken him to the foot of the hill, had seen her up there, a blue dot in the grass beside Ludlam, and so would make no advances when the miserable day ended and the dinner hour brought them together. He was at the bridge again the next morning, and the next, but only one forlorn image stared up at him from the pool. Lucy had returned to the class, and was working all day long. For three days they did not exchange one word.

On the fourth day, late in the afternoon, Candace firmly took away Lucy's brushes.

"Go for a walk," she commanded. "You are

working yourself to death — you're getting a little lost-cat look about your chin. The girls are playing baseball, if you want exercise."

Lucy wished neither exercise nor company, and she slipped away in another direction. A brook on the edge of the woodland ran and tumbled before her like some little shining creature trying to win a smile; but she saw only her misery. If Dana had really loved her, he would not have let her go like this: he would have insisted on seeing her, gloriously righted himself. Lucy believed that only a fundamental indifference could explain his passivity, and with all her crushed heart she wished herself lying face down in the careless water.

The brook frolicked as though it were leading her on to some good fortune, but, turning a sharp corner, it brought her upon a huddled image of dejection that startled her own trouble out of sight. Willing sat at the foot of a bank, down which he obviously had tumbled, studying the two pieces of his broken crutch. His happy relief at sight of her nearly made her cry.

"O Miss Cuyler! Now isn't this too wonderful?" he burst out. "No, I'm not hurt in the least, but just look at my crutch! And there isn't a good stick in sight. I was going to set out on my hands and knees that very moment, and then you came!

Isn't that just my luck? Do you think you could find me a stick?"

She was already looking. "But will a stick be enough?" she asked.

"Oh, I can manage," he assured her cheerily. "Perhaps two sticks would be better, though. I can mend this crutch all right, once I get back to my house. I declare, I never was so glad to see any one in my life. It was just like a miracle, to look up and find you there."

"Oh, I know!" Lucy had caught his animation. "I will bring you the horse, and you can ride home. He is the gentlest old creature — would you mind?"

"I think that would be too lovely for words! Of course, I didn't mind hobbling if I had to — but that would be perfect. Can't you tell some one else to bring him? Malone is awfully obliging — he'd do it."

"But the horse is right up here a little way," said Lucy quickly. "I should love to do it." And she hurried off. The errand had brought a momentary respite from pain.

A string hung about the old beast's neck, left there by the girls, who indiscriminately rode and sketched him, and he followed his guide as willingly as though he recognized the debt he owed her. Lucy brought him up to a stone and made Willing use her shoulder until he was safely mounted.

Then she took the leading string, and they went slowly up by way of the open meadow. Willing's relief bubbled over in conversation, as cheerfully unmodulated as a child's.

"I feel just like Joan of Arc," he declared. "I suppose it's the white horse. Or like — who was it that had an angel go in front of him to show the way? Oh, I guess I'm thinking of the Sherman monument — you know, at the entrance to the Park. Oh, you don't live in New York, do you? But you must come there sometimes: every one does. I wish you'd visit my studio, next time you're there. You know I'm a decorator, but I do pottery on the side. I'd love to know what you thought of my pottery. Miss Ware has been perfectly lovely about it; she has got me no end of orders. People do seem to like it. Dear me, this is comfortable. I hope you aren't getting tired? This is another lesson for me against worrying. I used to worry about my old age; but I never shall any more. Some one will give me a cottage and bring me a horse."

Lucy looked up with a troubled forehead. "One must not be improvident," she ventured.

"Well, that's what I used to think. But things do come to me, Miss Cuyler — just like this cabin. Why not recognize it and be happy?"

She shook her head. "So it has hurt you, too,"

she said, but so low that he did not hear. He had caught sight of the baseball game.

"There are all those girls," he exclaimed. "What will they think of us?" But he laughed, evidently not much caring.

The girls were too absorbed in their game to notice anything else, but Palmer Jacks stared from his window, then came to his door for a better look.

"I suppose he thinks you're just giving me a ride for fun," Willing laughed. "I hope I'll have a chance to do you a good turn some day, Miss Cuyler. I'd do anything for you. I guess most of us would. Hasn't it been a happy time, up here? We'll miss Malone, won't we!"

The horse stopped, surprised at the jerk on his string halter.

"Miss him?" Lucy stammered. "Is he — going?"

"Why, didn't you know? Oh, dear, maybe it's a secret. I heard him talking to Miss Ware about it after lunch. They must have seen I was right there. I'm sorry if I oughtn't to have told, but —— "

"When is he going?" Lucy's voice was hoarse and tremulous, but Willing noticed nothing.

"On the early train in the morning. He said something about work — a newspaper wanting him, or something. I suppose he'll say good-bye at

dinner. Maybe he hates saying good-bye, though. I knew a fellow who was like that — he wouldn't say good-bye to his own mother when he was going out to South Africa. But, then, she had heart disease: that may have had something to do with it. Malone is a nice fellow, isn't he — he's so kind. Well, here we are. I just don't know how to thank you. There's a long stick behind the door: if you'll get me that I shall be all right. That's it. I declare, I wish I could do something for you."

She gave him a wan little smile. "You have," was her puzzling answer as she turned away. Willing thought about it for several minutes as he got out his tools and prepared to mend his crutch.

"I suppose she means because I'm so cheerful," he concluded aloud. "They're always saying that at the boarding-house — that I'm so cheerful. I do them good. I don't see why I shouldn't be cheerful, with my luck. To think of her turning up in that out-of-the-way place just that particular minute! Did you *ever?*"

Lucy went slowly along the edge of the woodland, still leading the old horse. She wanted to think it all out, very clearly and reasonably, but the confusion of great disaster seemed to be deafening her ears and blinding her eyes. It was like trying to sit still and think in the panic of shipwreck. She

could only act, blindly, instinctively, as men clutch at spars before the engulfing sea.

The placid summer afternoon was fading, and, though the fields were still golden, the woods looked dusky. A second time, Lucy stole noiselessly along the path that led to Dana's cabin. Through the window she saw him sitting idly before the piano, but she came to the very door without his hearing her. He had been studying a sheet of manuscript music, set up before him, but evidently his sombre thoughts had wandered far from work. The droop of his head and shoulders made her gasp with love and pity.

Perhaps he heard. He turned a startled face, and stared as though he could not believe.

"Lucy!" he stammered. "*Lucy!*"

She did not know what to say or do under his staring, so she smiled, a frightened, pleading, breathless smile that struck away the bewilderment that held him and brought him across to her in two strides. He caught her up bodily into his arms, pressing her to him again and again, kissing the curve of her cheek, her forehead, her closed eyes and passive lips. Then he dropped down on his knees before her, burying his face in her hands.

"Oh, forgive me!" he muttered. "My dear, dear love, forgive me!"

She crouched down on the floor beside him,

pressing her face into his coat, twining her arms tightly about his neck.

"You do love me," she sobbed gladly. "Oh, you do love me, Dana!"

"Love you, Lucy? I'm half dead with loving you! But what right has a beggar like me? I thought you saw it, too, and I tried to be glad that you threw me over —— O Lucy, it has been so horrible!" The catch in his voice echoed her sob. They clung to each other as though disaster were again upon them.

"But you do love me," she repeated, as though to reassure him.

"Love you, my sweetheart! If that were all! How can I make you understand how poor I am, how hopelessly poor? Lucy, I couldn't hire the cheapest kind of a flat for you. I couldn't pay one rough servant to wait on you; and it's going to be so for years to come. Even if I gave up all idea of writing music, I couldn't earn these for you within — oh, it's too humiliating!"

"But I have some money," she whispered. He laughed a little.

"I couldn't come and live on your poor little money, dear girl! And even if I were willing to — marriage takes so much. You have been living with other people, you see. Suppose you had to pay rent for a flat ——"

"But I have a house," the smothered voice persisted. "I have two houses Dana. And the one in town has a music room looking over the Back Bay — such a lovely big room! And the other house has a great, wonderful seacoast, all its own, and a garden. O Dana, you would love my garden. The little house in Milton is mine too; Cousin Susie was living with me. So, you see, we needn't worry about flats, need we?"

He had drawn away from her, risen slowly to his feet. The gravity of his face frightened her.

"You mean that you are rich?"

"Not dreadfully rich," she pleaded. "Not — millions and millions. But we needn't think about money, that's all, Dana. And even if I am rich — " Her voice failed her for sheer terror of the barrier that every word might be raising between them.

But the soul of Dana Malone knew neither conventionality nor pretence. He threw up his arms with a shout of joy. "To think of that!" he cried. Then his arms dropped, and he stared down at her with awed intensity.

"What wonderful luck!" he uttered solemnly. "What astounding, wonderful luck!"

After dinner that night — a strange, oblivious pretence of dinner — they drew Candace into the

empty workroom. The world's attitude had by this time thrust itself upon Dana's recognition, and he told the news gravely, braced for her dismay. She sank down on the platform, facing them in bewildered reproach.

"O my children," she exclaimed, "how did this happen?"

"How could it help happening?" Dana returned. Lucy curled down against her friend, a hand on her knee.

"It had to be," she whispered.

"But your people!" Candace exploded. "Dana, a girl in Lucy's position can't be just married up like some little art student. It is an alliance you're proposing to make, you —— "

"Wild Westerner without a cent to his name," he finished for her. "Candy, if I hadn't something I considered real to offer Lucy — besides what I feel — I should consider myself a hound if I looked at her. But don't you think that in the long run, after years of work, my music will balance her money and — and position, or whatever you call it?"

"So much more than balance it?" Lucy breathed at her shoulder.

"But it isn't the long run we are facing." Candace firmly put away Lucy's cajoling hand, then weakly left her own on the girl's knee. "It's the

short run that we have to consider. What are Lucy's people going to say to me?" There was a gleam of rueful humour through the last words, and they brightened before it.

"There isn't anybody who will take it very hard," Lucy urged. "And when they realize Dana's genius —— "

"And besides," he broke in, "honestly and truly, Candy, do you think any one could know me and go on believing that I was a fortune hunter?"

She dropped her eyes from his straight, dark, eager glance with a sigh of reluctant honesty.

"No, I don't," she admitted. In an instant he, too, was down on the platform beside her. Their arms met about her shoulders.

"O Candy, be good to us!" they cried.

She was good to them, of course. She even grew genial over the situation before their long conference was over. When, at last, they left her, she had forgotten the worldly difficulties, and sat smiling to herself in the dark at the combination they made. Not till the glow of their fervour had died away did she realize all the elements of that combination. Then for a startled moment she confronted Lucy and Dana as they were in cool reality, shorn of the glamour of infinite concession that their love shed

about them. A dismayed exclamation, pitying and yet humorous, brought her hands over her face.

"And they haven't learned to laugh yet," she murmured. "Oh, poor little children, they can't even laugh!"

CHAPTER FOUR

"Lucy, Lucy! I can't wait!" Dana spoke with a laugh and a tightening of the arm that held his wife. "At first you will see a big, brown land, very dusty and withery if the fall rains haven't begun, and you'll think it hasn't trees enough, and you'll miss the natural grass, and you'll want more rivers, and more finish to things — it's rough on the edges. And then presently you will begin to get it, the charm, the feeling, the smell of it — the great, brown backs of the foothills, old Tamalpais cutting into blue, blue sky — the bay, and the gardens all heaped up and running over — oh, my dear!"

She smiled up at him, looking like a sleepy and much loved little girl in her deep content.

"It is so beautiful that I never went before," she said murmurously.

"I couldn't bear it if you had! Outsiders see it like Cook's tourists doing a cathedral; but you're going with a true believer and a devout heart. Lucy, how do you pronounce Los A-n-g-e-l-e-s?"

She gave it the hard g and the "lees" ending of

the Eastern resident, and he came down on her with joyous severity.

"Never let me hear that sound from your lips again. You want to say it just as you say 'angelus,' soft g and all. It isn't correct, of course — neither way is correct; but it's native, it's the old Californian way. The other is parvenu. Do look off there! Had you any idea the desert was so beautiful? Oh, this West!"

Their train lay like a tiny dark snake in a vast waste of mottled desert, gray-green and tawny. Sage, sand and alkali spread unbroken to the far horizon, drenched with gold and glow in the transforming light of late afternoon. The strange land, forbidding and desolate under the glaring noon, had come into its daily hour of magic loveliness. Other passengers had gone forward to inspect the burned culvert that held them, so for the moment they had the observation vestibule — back platform of less luxurious days — to themselves. The great stillness, the quivering tide of light, set Dana's Western blood racing.

"I've got to do something about it," he exclaimed from his full heart.

Lucy, beauty drugged and drifting, curled closer against him.

"Write lovely music," she said.

"That isn't half enough. I want to go about the

earth helping other people to marry — people who love each other like this."

"O Dana, do you suppose they really do?"

"Yes, little Lucy, I think it is very likely. And sometimes they can't have it. Some people can't have much of anything, and I get all this! Doesn't that make you sit up and wonder?"

Nothing, at that moment, could make Lucy sit up or wonder, or draw from her anything but a caressing murmur, and Dana fell silent, staring with astonished intentness at his lot.

"If I were rich, you know what?" he began suddenly, in the familiar phrase of years.

"You are rich." The calm statement drew from him a startled laugh.

"I?" It proved overwhelming: he could not go on. All that chaotic summer he had rejoiced in Lucy's money as the amazing piece of good luck that would allow him to marry her and to make lovely music; and during the five days since he had carried her off, the abundant money in his pockets had been a pleasant, though somewhat remote, consciousness. He enjoyed it as he enjoyed his excellent clothes, with little direct attention to spare for it. That Lucy's husband might be considered a rich man, with a rich man's powers and responsibilities, was a suggestion almost terrifying. Presently he protested.

"It's all yours. I am only prince consort."

"No, sir. By a special Act of Parliament, they ascended the throne together and reigned as Dana and Lucy for many happy and prosperous years."

"What were the chief events of their reign?" he asked with the air of a schoolmaster. The little games they played were her dear delight. Until Candace had discovered her, no one had ever dreamed that Lucy could be mischievous and merry.

"Many notable reforms were inaugurated," she took it up. "No one ever hurt anybody. There were no lost puppies, or frightened children, or poor men out of work, or bewildered foreigners with bundles who get on wrong trains and the conductors are cross to them and they haven't money for another fare and they can't understand — O Dana, doesn't that nearly kill you? And all true lovers were married and were almost as happy as their beloved sovereigns."

"A very good recitation, Miss Lucy. But you have left out the wonderful development of music during this period. Musical fellowships were founded, don't you remember? And all genuine talent got a generous public hearing. Ah, those were the halcyon days!"

"Silly!" observed Lucy, and they laughed, then slipped away from each other as fellow passengers

were heard returning. Dana rose and leaned casually against the rail.

"You remember the last time we crossed, Lucy, what a sandstorm there was about here?" he was saying as their platform was invaded. Her eyebrows reproached him for the deception even while her lips betrayed unlawful enjoyment. "Suppose we go forward and see what the prospects are," he added hastily, as she refused to play up to him.

"They say we're going to stay here all night," a passenger volunteered as they moved away. An overheard, "I thought they were bride and groom!" gave them an absurd delight. Dana swung his wife to the ground, then struck his chest a resounding blow.

"I want to strut," he confided.

"You do, dear," said Lucy, and they laughed until it was necessary to sit down on the sandy bank for breath. The gayety of love, the godlike merriment of its lighter moments, was still threatening their decorum as they passed the group gathered about the engine. They paid scant attention to the burned culvert, except to wonder that a little dry gulley, so easily crossed by them, should be impassable to a great, clever train.

"You know, Lucy, there is something in that fellowships idea," Dana presently began, as they strolled on toward the flaming West.

"Music fellowships?"

"Yes: for men of genuine talent — to give them a decent chance to do original work. And fine public hearings arranged for them. We really could do that, you and I together. It would mean loads of work and money, but we could get big people interested, or work through one of the composers' associations. It would be rather fine! Do you know that the man who wrote 'Carmen' committed suicide, through discouragement and hunger? Why, Schubert never had a chance to hear some of his own greatest orchestral pieces: and it was over forty years before the 'Unfinished' symphony was even printed. It is so brutal, the way the world leaves them to starve to death, and then goes mad over their works. Or else it never discovers them at all, like poor old Sam Bynner, out in California. I've told you about him: how he taught me for love all those years. He had born gift, in his line; but he couldn't get heard. Well, he needed help. Lucy, there is a bully chance for us — to stand by and help genius, to make people listen! O, my child!"

"Dana! What a wonderful idea!"

To their excited spirits the plan seemed as simple as it was great. They fell upon it with pencil and paper, developing its possibilities, noting down the men whose judgment and influence must help, the

societies that might cooperate, and handing over to it their thousands with a lavishness that should have brought Grandfather Cuyler scurrying back to earth; but only the loving and giving spirit of Great Aunt Betty manifested itself. Lucy's face was aglow. They felt as though they had unlocked the grim gate between genius and the blundering world when at last they came back to the land about them.

In their absorption, they had not observed that the ground under their feet rose and then gradually fell again, putting a scarcely noticeable mound between them and the helpless train; and so a big moment was prepared for them. For suddenly they found themselves standing alone in the desert. North, south, east, and west it rolled up to the horizon rim, apparently unbroken, rigidly still and silent. Not a sage leaf fluttered nor an insect called: there was not even the shadow of a bird to move over the waste. The last sunbeams, streaming level from the west, spread a gold and amethyst enchantment: the earth was turned to a great jewel dipped in yellow wine, and the breath of the desert, dry, sunned and aromatic, was the wine's heady fragrance. They stood with clinging hands and lifted faces, like Adam and Eve newly created, wondering and exultant.

The sun vanished and the colours began to fade. Dana turned solemn eyes on his wife.

"We ought to have died, right then," he said.

"Yes," she assented; but her hand in his confided that she was glad they had not.

They turned back faintly saddened at the change. The glamour had died with the sunlight, and already the blank face of the desert showed harsh and repellent. A sudden desire for the train and their own safe little shut-in drawing-room, for lights and books and the sound of human voices, made them hasten up the slope that hid the scene of their delay. Perhaps a subconscious memory of the whistles which their outer ears had ignored was coming to them, for presently they ran, smiling at themselves, but with worried eyes.

"There is really — nothing — to hurry about," Lucy panted.

"Of course not," said Dana, quickening his pace.

Their pause at the top had the shocked suddenness of a cry or a fall. For a dreadful moment they stood blankly still, trying not to believe their eyes. Below them they saw the burned culvert, the trodden sand where the passengers had gathered, but, far away to the east, a receding line of black stood for their train. This time they were truly alone in the desert; and the discovery was not exalting.

Dana instinctively flung out a shout and waved his hat. Then they sat down on the railway ties, conscious of weak knees.

"Well, what do you think of that!" he muttered.

"And they said they would stay here all night," Lucy protested, with rising indignation.

"Perhaps they've gone to send for the wrecking crew, and are coming back," Dana suggested, but his tone was not hopeful. The desert looked very big and grim, and they drew close together, like lost children.

"Isn't it more likely that they are going round another way?" Lucy asked, quietly putting herself out of the category of those who must be cheered at any cost.

"I — don't know, dear. Ah, I ought to be killed!" He was tragic with remorse. "Why don't you jump all over me for not taking better care of you?"

"It was as much my fault as yours. Dana, how far is it to — where?"

"That is what I am wondering. Wasn't there a station — let me see — since lunch, certainly!"

"But if we were going thirty or forty miles an hour ——"

"Lucy, stop it!" Dana had lost colour. "Arithmetic is bad for the soul; don't do any more of it. They'll send back when they find us missing, and a few hours in the desert won't hurt us. It's an adventure, my dear girl. People enjoy adventures."

"Yes, so they do." Lucy valiantly straightened up. "Well, then, we will enjoy it."

"Hooray for adventure," said Dana feebly, following the attempt with a hearty and spontaneous, "Oh, damn!" She relaxed into laughter, so genuine that he smiled a reluctant response.

"You little brick!" he exclaimed, his hand falling on her shoulder. "Well, shall we walk to — meet it?"

Walking to meet a train that was going rapidly in the other direction was not a hopeful prospect, but there was nothing else to do. They felt curiously tall and exposed as they set out across this flat land, where nothing else stood up except the telegraph poles, stalking in solemn file beside the track. Thoughts of crawling dangers kept Dana's eyes alert, but Lucy mused in trustful security.

"You know, Dana," she said finally, "if we had died then, when you said, it would have been the perfect moment in one sense, because our life together was absolutely unmarred, and because — oh, everything that you meant. It was the climax of perfect things. But it takes imperfect things, too — struggles and hard things overcome, to — to ——"

"Make a salad?"

"Exactly. We want seasoned happiness, tested love, for our real climax. I can't actually believe that we shall ever hurt each other, but we shall, you know. Every one knows that." She looked as

grieved as though it had already happened. "Then we shall learn better, and after that will come the time to die — if we must."

"There is only one way on earth that you can hurt me, little Lucy;" the superb confidence of youth in love straightened his shoulders and lifted his head. "So long as you care for me ——"

"That will be always and forever, Dana!"

"Then there is nothing else that could matter. Besides," he presently went on, "if we are going to die now, there will be a bigger moment for it on Tuesday."

"When we arrive?"

"When we stand on the front deck of the ferry-boat, with the city cut out like a silhouette against the sunset, and the ships ——"

A distant whistle interrupted. Rescue was signalling from the east, where their train was rapidly growing larger. They ran toward it, waving gloriously. In a very short time they were being hurried on board by an indignant conductor and a chuckling, exulting black porter.

"Ah thought you was left, sir," he bubbled over in the intervals of the conductor's severe comments on wandering away from the train and not heeding whistles. "Ah looked and looked and Ah couldn' find you nowhar, so Ah made 'em come back for you, sir. Pretty lonesome place

to be left — yas, sir! Ah'm mighty glad Ah looked you up!"

"I'm mighty glad he did," Dana exclaimed when at last the stateroom door was shut on the excited welcome. Lucy sank down drooping with weariness and relief.

"I should say so! I hope you gave him a good reward — five dollars, at least."

He paused in the act of throwing off his coat. "Why, darling, I gave him fifty," he explained with a laugh.

"Fifty *dollars?*"

"Of course. Think what he did for us, dear girl, what he saved us from." Dana was still half laughing, but, about Lucy's mouth had come a look that any member of old Adrian Cuyler's large family would have recognized at once.

"But that was absurd," she protested gravely. "Twenty would have been lavish, but perhaps justified. But fifty! We can't fling money about like that, Dana."

He was as grave as she, now, and a little pale.

"It was very lavish," he said quietly. "I thought we ought to be very lavish. He is a good fellow, Lucy. He is saving money to buy a home, he told me, and fifty dollars is a long jump toward it, for him. He almost cried, he was so pleased. I thought it was right to do him a good

turn — when you realize the good turn he has done us."

Lucy was nervously overwrought, and the appeal did not reach her. A vulgar spirit would have shown irritation; but she was only distressed.

"Why not give him five hundred, then?" she argued. "He would have been still more pleased. Things have to be in proportion, dear!"

He drew a quick breath for speech, then brought his lips together again and turned away.

"I'm sorry," he said from the door of the dressing-room. "I made a mistake. We must brush up now, if we want any dinner."

With the door closed between them, he stood for several moments staring blindly into the mirror. The dark eyes that stared back at him were hurt and dismayed. Then he plunged his face into the cold water.

"She's tired, poor little soul," he muttered.

Ten minutes of separation brought them together in such a fervour of loving forgiveness that neither noticed the other's serene lack of self-blame. Dana chivalrously put the incident aside, as something to be forgotten as quickly as possible, and though Lucy was not hungry, and hated to pay out a dollar for six courses which she could not possibly eat, she repressed her longing to suggest a dinner of chocolate and biscuits, lest it seem a reproach to

his extravagance. All was right with their world that night, and Dana sent a long letter to Candace, telling her about their musical mission. If Lucy was a little less enthusiastic about it, now that the sunset was gone, his own mounting excitement kept him from realizing this.

"I feel a little the way I did when I pulled the pup out of the East River," he confided, when he had read her the letter. "Isn't it fun to be rich, Lucy!"

Her smile was faintly worried. "And not to be lost in the desert," she added quickly.

"And to be young, and in love, and wearing diamonds." They laughed at that. Kind old John Malone, commission merchant and political lord of half a city, had sent his nephew a generous check, with the suggestion that a diamond scarfpin would be a suitable possession for a young man making a distinguished connection. The picture of himself so adorned had given Dana endless joy. Being left free in the matter, he had spent over half of the money on a jewel for Lucy, then, with the rest in his hand, he had hunted up Palmer Jacks.

"You know about clothes," he had declared with worried simplicity, his old antagonism forgotten. "What can I get with that?"

No other call could have so roused Palmer's sympathies. He took entire charge of the situation,

introduced Dana to concealed tailors and private haberdashers, chose his materials for him, and managed the fund with a diplomacy and skill that resulted in an astonishingly good outfit. He then presented the groom with a handsome leather bag, took him to Boston and put him correctly through the dazing ordeal of the wedding, engaged their drawing-room on the train, equipped it with flowers and magazines, saw the pair off and borrowed five dollars to take him back to New York, well satisfied with his exertions, and leaving Dana in a state of breathless gratitude that had rapidly solidified into devotion.

"Good old Palmer," he murmured, smiling over the memory of it all. "Oh, good old world, Looshy!"

The train slipped on without further hindrance. Presently the Truckee River tumbled and foamed for them, and a dizzying glimmer of Sierra pines and lakes was flashed on them, biograph fashion, through the cracks of the snow sheds. Then the broad western slopes of vineyard and orchard led them down into the land that was to Dana mother and father, home and religion, his beloved, generous, sunbrowned California. The very breath of the fields, he insisted, had a special odour, known to no other state, and Lucy, obediently testing it, convinced herself that she, too, caught it.

Passing the tule marshes of the lower Sacramento,

Dana fell into the staring silence which his wife had already learned to respect. Presently he took out a small ruled notebook and began rapidly to write in the mysterious alphabet of music. After a brief spurt, he paused, pencil suspended, humming in dumb show, then again the notes seemed to spring from his pencil point. When he put the book away again, he discovered that Lucy had dressed for arriving, even to veil and gloves, and was sitting up opposite him beside a strapped bag, making so proper and charming a picture of a lady arriving that he laughed out.

"It wasn't anything," he said, in answer to her questioning smile. "Only it does seem so funny for me to be coming home with a wife and luggage! And such a complete wife, some way. You're so rounded and finished, Lucy: sometimes I feel shaggy beside you, like a wild ass of the desert beside a — a water lily."

"Beside a white rabbit," she said with a touch of self-scorn. "O Dana, I hoped marriage would make me braver, but it hasn't a bit." She leaned toward him with lowered voice in the earnestness of her confession. "Do you know, when I want to ask the conductor the right time, or the name of a station, I have to clear my throat first, and my heart goes quicker? Isn't that absurd? What can I do?"

He bent down to kiss the gloved hands folded on her knee. "You can tell me to ask him. That's what I am here for."

"Ah, but I can't give in to it like that. Of course, you do make it vastly easier. I don't mind walking into the dining-car at all with you. That used to be such an ordeal! I have gone hungry many a time, just because I couldn't make myself start. Tell me, truly and honestly, don't you just a little hate to walk down a car aisle by yourself?"

He shook his head, smiling at the troubled intensity of her face. "I'm afraid I never gave it a thought in my life." She sighed.

"That is how one should be. Dana, do you think I ought to make myself face it more — go out now and walk the length of the train?" She was rising, all ready to do it at his word: but he drew her down again.

"I forbid it," he said, with vast enjoyment of the word. "Remember, Lucy, if ever you are tempted to martyrize your darling self like that, your husband forbids it — and that settles it for you." She enjoyed the word, too, as the corners of her mouth betrayed; but she was not reassured.

"That is far too easy," she objected. "But you are a great comfort, Dana. And one is so blessedly at home with you."

"You don't have to clear your throat before addressing me?"

She gave the absurd question serious thought. "It would be hard to say something that you might not like," she admitted. "If I had to criticise you — oh, my heart would be very loud indeed!"

"But you would walk right up to it like a little major?"

"Yes. How would you face it if you had to criticise me?"

"I would call you to me, quietly but firmly, and I would say, 'Lucy, why can't you realize that it takes you twenty minutes longer to dress than you think it does? Then you would not always be exactly twenty minutes late.' Then I would dry your tears and ——"

"I am not," she protested, her eyes drowned in laughter.

"That was merely an example. It had nothing to do with the facts, of course. Besides, it was only fifteen minutes this morning. For once, I didn't have to keep the diner open by main force." He glanced out of the window, then started forward to look more closely. "Why, it's raining," he cried. "Oh, no fair! Oh, we can't have that, Lucy!"

"We won't get wet," she reassured him, startled at his dismay.

"Get wet! It isn't that. It's your first sight

of San Francisco — old Telegraph Hill and Russian Hill and Nob Hill and the sun going down behind them in a blaze of glory. Why, Lucy, that was to be the perfect climax, when we might as well die as not — don't you remember?" He was thrusting things into his bag with grieved obliviousness. "I could hardly wait to get here, thinking of it. And now this dum'd old rain — oh, I must say!"

They were sweeping along the margin of the bay, beaten flat just now by the clean, strong downpour. The ground showed that rain had been falling for several hours, and the growing light in the west was promising; but big drops were still running down the windows when the train ended its long run at the ferry and the laden passengers streamed to the boat. Dana was gloomy with disappointment.

"But I like rain, Dana," Lucy urged.

Passengers from local trains were coming on board, and apparently they, too, liked rain. Few had umbrellas, and there were many wet coats and damaged hats, yet all carried an air of holiday gayety. There were broad smiles everywhere; acquaintances greeted one another with laughter and sounds of congratulation, hearty hands were laid on damp shoulders; strangers seemed to fall into conversation at any pretext. Lucy stared at them.

"I never saw such a merry people," she finally protested. "Are they always like this?"

Sudden understanding brought Dana to his feet with a jump.

"It's the first rain," he cried. "Oh, jinks — and to think that I complained! Me!"

He left her without ceremony, turning eagerly to the nearest group of men. The breaking of the long summer drought had been a yearly romance to his childhood; and to the least imaginative of them it meant more than local prosperity and vanquished dust. They held out their hands to the dwindling drops, and told Dana to a day how long it had been since the last rain, late in May, and even invited him below to celebrate the event when he explained that he was a native. He came back to his wife radiant with the sense of home and welcome.

"You don't know what that rain means — you can't," he told her. "You're only a tourist. Come up forward: we are going to get our sunset, after all. I can manage everything, dear; you take the umbrellas. I hope they still have hacks at the station," he added with a reminiscent laugh. "It was the dream of my childhood to ride in one, and I never did. Wouldn't you rather have a hack than a taxi?"

She smiled constrainedly. "The hotel is near, isn't it?" she asked.

"Oh, yes. Ten minutes or so. It's clearing, dear. Look — look, there she is!"

The clouds were breaking, and already the hills of the city, rising steeply before them, were taking on purple and mystery against the gold of the west. Dana, leaning on the forward rail, was Jason coming home with the Golden Fleece, Parsifal approaching the Grail. He turned to his wife in silent recognition of their great moment. But Lucy's face was troubled, and about her mouth lay a faint compression that had come down to her from old Adrian Cuyler. Meeting his glance, she spoke impulsively.

"Dana!"

"Yes, dear."

She had to clear her throat. "Don't the cars run past the hotel?"

"Why, yes."

It was evident that her heart was very loud indeed, but she bravely went on. "Then why not just jump on a car? We haven't much luggage, and I could take a bag perfectly well."

In the pause that followed, her colour rose, but her lips were worriedly firm.

"As you please." Dana spoke in his usual voice, but his eyes avoided hers.

"It is silly to take carriages all the time when the cars are so quick and nice," she urged, breathlessly relieved that that was off her mind. "Don't you think so, dear? And cab drivers are such pirates. O Dana, this is very beautiful!"

"Yes," he assented.

"I don't wonder that you love it. And I know a little what showing it to me means, because I know what it will be to take you up to the North Shore place. Sometimes I can hardly wait for that."

"Yes," he said again.

"If we could only have had this alone," she went on. "That was what made the desert so wonderful. Now please let me take a bag. If you knew how my arms ache when you carry them all!"

Their perfect moment had passed, and the boat was gliding into its slip. Dana gathered up the luggage and led the way in silence. The car was crowded, and passengers climbed or fell over their bags with good-humoured endurance. Getting them off at the hotel proved an operation little short of surgery, though every one helped.

"How friendly and obliging they are," Lucy exclaimed, but Dana still said nothing. Once in their comfortable rooms — the Cuylers always took the best of rooms — she looked intently into his face.

"You are tired," she said.

"A little," he admitted, trying to smile. "I will go down and have a smoke, if you don't mind."

He was gone before she could remind him that it was dinner time. It was an orderly retreat without, but within a panic flight; for Dana assumed generosity as simply and inexorably as he assumed virtue

in the woman he loved. Before the door had closed, his loyalty was crying shame on his fear, assuring him hotly that he had misunderstood, that it could not be *that;* but he fled that he might hide his countenance from her until its foolish darkening had passed.

He was allowed no time for brooding. As he stepped out of the elevator on the ground floor an alert little elderly man, who had been sitting in upright patience on a bench near by, rose and stood smiling before him.

"I thought I might get a glimpse of you, Dana;" there was a charming serenity in his welcome. "I wouldn't interrupt you, but I did want a glimpse."

Dana had been so submerged in frowning thought that he could not come instantly to the surface. He glanced remotely at the fragile face, the clean-shaven, aged smile set between two neat patches of grizzled whisker, at the slight, wasted form held gallantly upright, the well-brushed and buttoned shabbiness; then he put out both hands with a joyous exclamation:

"Sam Bynner! Why, you dear old —— Why on earth didn't you send up word?"

"Well, I didn't like to disturb you." There was a mild twinkle in the eyes that were beaming up at Dana. "And when you had just arrived, too. But I was passing. Now we will sit down here, if

you have a moment to spare. I am not very good at standing."

Dana had had time to realize and be shocked at the change in his old friend: he seemed to have aged out of all proportion to his years. There was a change of the spirit, too. He had always been a diffident and patient soul, too afraid of wounding to elbow his way very successfully, yet trying most earnestly to do all that could be expected of him. That he seemed in some way to have "graduated" was Dana's first impression: the strain that had carved his face into hollows was over. Then the wide sweetness of his smile, the selfless shining of his kind eyes, seemed to deserve a bigger word. The little man had really taken on something angelic.

"You have been ill," Dana accused him.

"Ah, yes, more or less."

"But that won't do. Why ——" Then Dana saw the band of crêpe on the old-fashioned top hat, and stopped short. Mr. Bynner nodded, still faintly smiling.

"Yes, I am alone now." He spoke as detachedly as he had about his own health, yet with a gentle air of closing the topic. "Dana, I wanted you to know that I had meant to leave my piano to you. Of course, you won't need it, now. But you were always kind to what it produced ——"

Dana's forbidden sympathy seized the outlet.

"Kind!" he interrupted hotly. "I've heard everything since I went East, popular music and all, and there hasn't been a man who could touch you in your line. You ought to be rich and famous, Sam Bynner. Why aren't you? Did you really try hard enough to get heard?"

"Try hard enough?" Mr. Bynner might have been a disembodied spirit, smiling over the little woes of mankind. "Why, Dana, for thirty years I had only one other thought in life. You remember my opera? And poor Ned Hilliard's libretto was pretty good, pretty good; but they wouldn't listen."

"Who wouldn't?"

"The managers. For years and years we were after them, Ned and I. You remember how I went to New York? But they never listened, not once. They made appointments now and then, but they never kept them." He laughed to himself. "We got up an amateur production, and they said they would come, but they didn't. They wouldn't listen."

Dana winced. "What a young egotist I must have been! I didn't realize all this."

"Ah, you were young. And I didn't want to discourage you. As poor Ned used to say, they won't give you a hearing till you've succeeded, and you can't succeed till they've heard you. It is a hard game. I am glad to be done with it."

"But you are not done with it. Now look here!" Dana's hand closed on the other's shoulder with touched force. "You are right in line for a scheme Lucy and I are working out. Why, you're just what we want — a dog to try it on. Now, listen." He set forth his plan for a simpler relation between the composer of music and a music-hungry world, and Mr. Bynner listened in shining approbation.

"Fine, fine!" he declared. "Ah, then there is something that you can do for me."

"That's just what "

"No, no! Not that. It is for a gifted little fellow who lives out in the Mission: I am on my way to give him a lesson now. Such born talent, Dana! No money, ignorant parents, but running over with music, the little scamp. I discovered him just as I did you. I will carry him as far as I can, and then perhaps you —— Ah, little Dana Malone, it's queer to think of you as a rich man!" It was only the second time that that term had been offered Dana, but he accepted it as a matter of course.

"Isn't it?" he assented seriously. "But it is your music ——"

Again the lifted hand stopped him. "I have done. Not mine. But Luis Valdez — don't forget him. Here is the address. You can pass it on to him, if you like to call it that."

"I promise you I will. But no one can ever do for anybody what you did for me."

"You were a great joy." The kind, amused eyes caressed him. "I have been very proud of my pupil. Do you remember the Sam Bynner waltz which you wrote for my birthday? I have treasured that funny little manuscript, I can tell you."

Dana laughed. "The Sam Bynner waltz? Of course I remember it. Don't get up. Won't you stay to dinner and meet Lucy?"

"Not to-night. Ah, I must hurry. It has been good to see you, Dana." They walked together to the door, and Dana realized again how feeble his old friend had grown.

"I wish I could do something for you," he exclaimed, a question in his voice. Mr. Bynner pressed his hand.

"Do it for Luis," he said. "I have no needs, dear boy."

As Dana turned back, he saw Lucy coming in search of him. She had put on a delicate crêpe gown that accented the blue and rose and brown of her lovely colouring, and though she had neglected to change her stout little travelling shoes, Dana was blind to such distinctions. Love for her, amazed pride that so exquisite a lady should belong to him, swept through him like a clean wind, driving out a lurking cloud of troubled thought. Facing the

peopled hall, where men turned and gave her long, cool looks, was misery to Lucy, but she kept her eyes serene, her step unhurried: only her compressed lips hinted at effort. But the light of relief in her face as she saw Dana, the sudden, relaxed smile, very nearly landed her in his arms.

"I kept you waiting. I am sorry," he exclaimed. "But dear old Sam Bynner was here. I have adopted a son, Lucy."

She glanced up anxiously, but, meeting his smile, smiled back. "I hope it was a nice one," she said as they turned to the dining-room.

"I haven't seen him yet. It is a musical godchild. Luis Valdez — don't forget that name. I am to look out for him when Sam Bynner has — done all he can." Lucy was more interested in the menu.

"I would rather he were a little girl," she said inattentively.

"Well, perhaps we can pick up a little girl, too." They smiled over that. "We must see this boy. Dear me, the things we are going to do in this town!" He took from his pocket a list of names and laid it before her. "There is a dinner party we must give." She glanced at it with a disturbed frown.

"But they will invite us to dinner," she protested. "People always do when you are newly married. We don't need to do anything."

"Oh, this is just for the fun of the thing," he explained blithely. "I chose the very nicest people I knew, without regard to age, sex, or station. Such bully people, Lucy! Some of them are so poor, they couldn't ask us to dinner, anyway." Her troubled eyes were on the list.

"I know several of these names," she said absently.

"Oh, yes. You've heard me speak of the Will Merriams: he's an associate professor at the university. I used to go there to Sunday supper when I was in college, and help them wash the dishes afterward. And Mary Haden — she has the wonderful music room I told you about. And Leila Stevenson — good old Leila — she sings; and Morgan Dwight has the voice of seven angels, but is too everlastingly lazy to cultivate it. We'll get in a piano and sing between the courses. We will have a private dining-room, of course." The thrill of hospitality, the joy of coming back to his home with the power to give his friends an unstinted welcome, expanded his chest. "Oh, won't it be fun, Looshy!" he burst out.

"Yes, oh, yes! But suppose Miss Haden had planned to do it — she would, wouldn't she? Won't she be disappointed if we cut in ahead of her?"

"We'll go to her, too. And she won't have just the same crowd. No, she will love it, dear. They all will. And they'll love you. You won't feel

shy with the little Lucy." He smiled his understanding of her secret reluctance. "You can't, after ten minutes. And I'll be right there. What night shall we set?"

"Don't decide it now," she said quickly: then her colour rose. "I am so tired," she apologized.

"Of course you are, far too tired for plans!"

He put away the list at once, and his very voice caressed and cared for her. After dinner he insisted that she should go straight to bed and be read to sleep. After he had tucked her in, he shaded the light from her eyes and drew up a chair close beside her.

"It is such fun to take care of you," he confided.

The happiness of being taken care of shone up at him. "I don't think I am very well fitted to take care of myself," she admitted. "I have carried such a load, Dana: it has all been so worrying."

"And now?"

"Ah, now it is so blessed that I am half afraid of it. Perhaps I ought not to give myself up to it so. Isn't it cowardly to feel so relieved? Shouldn't I ——" Then she saw that he was smiling deeply, and broke off, hiding her face in his sleeve. "Jeering at me!" she complained. His laugh admitted it as he bent down to her.

"God bless Lucy and make her a *good* girl," he murmured.

CHAPTER FIVE

DANA was awakened early the next morning by a new and joyful consciousness. It had lain, an elusive brightness, along the edge of his dreams all night, as it had touched his waking thoughts with indirect pleasantness for the past two days; but, until this morning, the definite, powerful, delightful reality that he was a rich man had been an abstract idea rather than a concrete force. Had he awakened with a pair of stout wings on his shoulders, he could scarcely have been more suddenly initiated into a new state. The fun of it, the amazing fun! Brilliant plans, little and big, raced across his excited vision: to give, to help, to have, to do — the dizzying freedom took a dozen aspects a minute, and a plan of a white marble concert hall was interrupted by the thought that he could have a new sweater without a hint of incongruity. He knew that a stream of money from Lucy's abundant resources flowed into a reservoir, that they might both dip freely into it: and the desire — romantic rather than vulgar — to go forth and spend set his heart pounding in his side. The only flaw in his

happiness was that Lucy could not share it with him. She was so used to being rich, poor girl!

Excitement made staying still an impossibility. He stole out, and presently stood in the cool October brightness of the early morning, choosing his direction. He had brought his new check book as well as a pocketful of money, but the shops would not be open for two hours yet, and, after a cup of coffee, he was free to wander. He had come flying back to his city in the time of her great disaster and had worked for her until his scanty resources were used up, so he was spared now the fresh pain of her loss: it was the inspired courage of her uprising that gripped him and made him long to cheer as he went swiftly up the empty streets. And he had come back a rich man. He could do something for the many gaping needs that lurked behind this bravely prosperous front.

"My God, it's good!" he said aloud, his eyes dark before the revelation.

The haunts of his exploring youth tempted him. Little Italy, the Barbary Coast, the steep streets of Chinatown, were snares to his feet, but he would not look at them without Lucy. He strode on until he came to a forgotten remnant of the old city, a tiny house perched on a cliff and reached by a flight of steps so long that the whole suggested a pigeon house set on a stick. It had once been a thriftily

respectable little home, as its dormer roof and long French windows suggested, but squalor had overtaken its later years. The porch sagged, the unpainted wood visibly rotted; even the "For Sale" signs looked draggled and without hope. Dana mounted the steps as one having a right, and, near the top, turned to look down on a wonderful vista of bay and distant mountain. The greater part of his childhood had been passed on those steps, scrambling up them, tumbling or coasting down, playing games on the landing, with little apparent heed for the view; yet it was the view that seemed to stand for all those happy years, rather than their meagre setting. And he had come back a capitalist — little Dana Malone! The thought made him laugh out as he turned for a second look at his old home.

It was startling to find that a silent group had been staring at his back. A young woman with a coffee-pot clutched in one unconscious hand stood in the doorway, two half-dressed children at her side, and behind her a tall, sickly looking man with a shawl about his shoulders. The stillness of the group, its rigid expectancy, puzzled Dana as he caught off his hat and smiled apology.

"I beg your pardon! I used to live here when I was a small boy, so I came up to take a look."

Expectancy vanished and the group fell apart.

The man turned away with a sigh, the very children seemed to droop with disappointment. The young woman's face had saddened, but she stayed by her hope.

"You didn't think of buying?" she ventured.

"Oh, no." Then the meaning of their disappointment reached and touched him. "I'm sorry you thought that."

"Annie!" called the man impatiently from within, but she still lingered. "You don't know any one who'd buy it, I suppose?" she went on in a quick undertone. She had a gentle little face, and Dana fancied that there was a look of Lucy about it — Lucy pale, worn and in trouble.

"You want to sell?"

"It's his health. If we could go South and get started before the winter, the doctor says — and he could work down there — we'd sell it —— "

"Annie!" repeated the irritable voice.

"Yes, Ed. If you did hear of any one —— " She was turning away.

Dana's heart, already big with new emotions, seemed to open in his breast, letting out a warm rush of human love and pity.

"What would you sell it for?" he asked.

The price sounded pitifully small, for the relief it would purchase. And he was a rich man! No prince consort, but an equal dispenser of the power,

by the decree of his dear sovereign lady. All the morning's joyous desire seemed meant for just this climax.

"I'll buy it," he said.

Her cry brought back the others, and the tears on her cheeks strengthened and steadied the impulse that had made him speak. What he had done was as inevitable as to pull a drowning creature out of the river, and left the same afterglow of warmth and joy. The man tried to meet the news with the offhand, businesslike coolness of an American and a property owner, but his thin hand trembled as he got out his papers and showed Dana the present boundaries of his purchase.

"The agent lives right up here a block or two: he won't have gone to his office yet," he ventured, evidently half afraid of putting this romantic buyer to the test of reality. Dana, understanding, drew out his new check book.

"That's good," he said. "I can leave a check with him, and he can send me the papers as soon as they're made out." The woman caught his hand and laid her wet cheek on it.

"Oh, now, Annie!" remonstrated her husband; but the two men smiled at each other, in humorous understanding of the ways of wives.

The agent was found and the check written: a hearty handshake concluded the business.

The man tried to say something, hesitated and flushed.

"It's worth that much, anyhow," he brought out.

"Fully worth it," agreed Dana. The other looked relieved at the admission.

"Hope you'll sell it for a lot more some day," he said, offering his hand again.

"I like that fellow," was Dana's thought as he hurried to the nearest car line. Then he laughed aloud, with a slap at his breast pocket. What fun it was!

Lucy was awake and wondering when he came in, carrying a great sheath of roses. He held their faces to hers as she cried out in delight.

"O Dana! Who sent them?"

"California. With love and a kiss."

"You, of course. The darlings!" She revelled in them, touching, caressing them, while he happily looked on. "I suppose you got them for almost nothing," she added, with a sigh for what roses meant at home. He smiled to himself, for the land of flowers does not give away its blossoms in the streets of San Francisco, and he had gone deep in this first glorious plunge after beauty; but he said nothing. A bellboy brought jars and pitchers to hold them, and Dana arranged them under Lucy's orders. He had come racing home with the tale of his wonderful morning, yet, now that he was here, he could

not seem to begin it; a curious reluctance was quenching his eagerness. Lucy would love the adventure as he did, of course. Why should telling her suddenly appear formidable?

"I suppose I'm hungry," he said aloud. "Why, of course I am. I've been up for hours with nothing but a cup of coffee."

"My dear! Go down at once and —— "

"Not at all. We will breakfast up here." And Dana rang the bell as if he had been summoning waiters and ordering just what he wanted all his life. Lucy, offered an à la carte menu, always lost her appetite, and she hesitated among the dishes so worriedly that he took the matter into his own hands.

"You leave it to me. You'll be hungry when you see it," he assured her, writing the order with a bold pencil. "Go and tub your darling self while it is coming, and I'll get everything ready."

His easy authority relieved her of responsibility, and she yielded to it in happy relief. Could Dana have remained unaware of Grandfather Cuyler, that unlovely spirit would never have walked to blight their happiness; but already his unconsciousness was touched. Individual glimpses might be denied or explained away, but they left behind an unworded knowledge. When Lucy came back, little damp rings of hair about her ears, heelless,

unformidable and altogether sweet, he still shrank from telling what he had done, and the splendid tale was taking on in his mind a ridiculous and irritating aspect of confession.

"After breakfast," he reassured himself as the laden tray entered. He had drawn up a table beside the bed, and so surrounded it with roses that they might have been sitting in an arbour. She smiled reminiscence.

"Do you remember the time you decorated your cabin for me?"

"Do I!"

"And then you played 'Mary Alone.'"

"And then you stumbled." They laughed, dropping forks and spoons to clasp hands across the table. "The morning and the evening were the first day. Do you remember the evening, little Lucy?"

She could still flush over that strange, involuntary pilgrimage through the June dusk to his hidden cabin. "How could you be so sure it was I? Several of the girls had on white."

"How could I be so sure my heart was in my left side?"

"Weren't we happy — and weren't we miserable. That horrid Mr. Ludlam!" She shivered and went back to her breakfast.

"Aren't you ever going to tell me how he made trouble? What he said or did?"

"Yes. I'll tell you on your sixty-fifth birthday."

"But perhaps I couldn't go and hit him for it, then. He might be dead."

"Oh, never mind him. He can't hurt us again. Isn't it wonderful to be so close that no one — nothing — could get in between?"

"And to have done it in twenty-four hours! For you know, Lucy, we were just pretending that we weren't married, after that night. We knew we really were."

"Indeed we did not. I didn't know anything except that it was — nice weather. Why, Dana Malone, if any one had said to you, that first day, 'Four months from now, this shy, stiff girl from Massachusetts — '"

"'This inaccessible princess in a porcelain tower,'" he broke in, "'will be eating breakfast with you in San Francisco, with her hair in two blessed pigtails, one over each ear, and her appetite exceedingly good for a young woman who didn't want anything but toast,' I should have fainted, Miss Lucy. But, oh, I should have come to again!"

"Four months!" The shocking brevity of their acquaintance was a delight to her. "And we have only known each other in the country, too. We may be quite different in town. I know I am."

"I suppose you turn haughty and ask about grandfathers?" He could have told his tale

in happy confidence now, but he would not interrupt.

"Yes, of course. And I suppose you turn bohemian."

"What's that?"

"I don't know, if you don't."

"I know what some people think it is — loathly beasts they are," said Dana, serenely buttering toast. "Your aunts will probably call me that."

"But, just between ourselves, Dana, are you?"

"Lord, no. *Je suis bon bourgeous, moi. Père de famille.*" He laughed expansively. "I wonder if you will consider our dinner party bohemian? I never thought of the horrid word, myself."

"Oh, our dinner —— " she began vaguely.

"We must write the notes to-day, dear girl. You'll enjoy them: you can't help it," he added reassuringly, seeing how her face had clouded. He rambled on about these dear and charming friends, not dreaming that something had to be said, and that Lucy, in a misery of dread, was nerving herself to "walk up to it like a little major." It came quite suddenly.

"Dana! About these people — why not have them to tea instead of to dinner?"

"To tea?" he repeated blankly.

"Yes. In the afternoon. It would be so much simpler than a great dinner and I should really

meet them better. It isn't as if they would expect anything like a dinner from us: the obligation is all the other way. What do you think, dear?"

It was Dana who had to clear his throat. In his averted eyes was a look of bewildered fright. "Do you mean — because of the expense, Lucy?"

"Well, it would cost absurdly, a private dining-room and a piano. And when we can get the same thing, can meet them all just as well at a tea don't you see?"

"Are we — spending too much? I supposed — "

"Oh, there is plenty, of course. But, Dana dear," she lowered her voice confidentially, "I thought it would be so very nice if the rent of the Shore house for the summer just balanced this trip. Don't you think it would?"

"Why, Lucy?"

"Oh, it would be like getting all this for nothing. The old place was never rented before."

"Do you" — the question came hard, but he dragged it out by main force, miserably bent on understanding — "do you spend much of your income?"

"A good deal. There are those two big houses to keep up, besides all that one has to give away. My grandfather used to say that one should live on the income of one's income: invest the income, you see, and live on the interest of that; but I have

never tried it. I shouldn't quite want to, I think." And yet Lucy's voice was wistful, and about her mouth lay the faint compression that had come down to her with her thousands. Dana saw it, for the first time, and an ashamed colour swept up to his forehead. "It is so foolish to throw money about," Lucy was saying, vastly relieved that that was over. "Of course, if you really cared about it being a dinner ——"

"No."

"Then that is settled. And I think the tea will be very pleasant. What are we going to do to-day?"

Dana rose. "Suppose I let you dress now? We've finished, haven't we? Then we can go out and do — something."

He abruptly left her, shutting the door between the two rooms. He knew, now; and all that he had explained away came back to reinforce his knowledge. His princess in the porcelain tower was clay, like other people. He had laughed at Lucy, teased her for small foibles; but his idealistic youth had accepted her, simply and without wonder, as flawless. And now, with the ugly flaw past denial, he had as yet no thought for how it must affect him. He could see only his heartsickening disappoin.. ment.

"Oh, no, no!" he protested aloud, but the denial was only mechanical. He knew.

Fortunately, Lucy was a long time dressing. Chivalry presently rose up to combat the desolating sense of loss. Before she opened the door, he was sorry for her, tender over her, humbly apologetic that he, so full of vital flaws, should have judged her for this single defect. His one thought was to hide his bruise from the merry, challenging eyes that sought his from the doorway. Lucy had made herself very handsome, and knew it.

"Being married is really a tremendous lark," she confided to him as they went out together. "What did you do this morning when you were out so early?"

Memory of what he had done came back with an appalling shock. He drew breath, nervously, to tell her; but the elevator was not a suitable place, and in the courtyard below they were stopped by an old acquaintance. After that, there seemed to be no time, Lucy was so eager to see the city, so absorbed in its vivid history.

"I'll tell her at lunch," he decided, irritated and ashamed at his own reluctance, but when, at last, hunger drove them into a café, a new aspect of the affair kept him silent. For a dismal conviction that he had made a fool of himself, that radiant morning, had been steadily gaining ground under his cheerful conversation. He had taken a goodly handful of his wife's money and bought with it an inaccessible

cliff in an undesirable neighbourhood. Large sums spent in blasting and grading might bring the tiny lot within reach; but even then it would be of little value until that down-at-the-heel corner of town had suffered a change. To have bought it without her consent might well make her anxious as to what he would do another time; and, at the thought of worried strictures, his chin went up and his lips stiffened. By every instinct of his being, Dana Malone was the head of his family, and the head of a family may not be put in the position of a schoolboy who has overdrawn his allowance. No, not even if he is in the wrong.

"You don't seem hungry," observed Lucy.

"Curious — after that breakfast!" He forced himself back to cheerful attentiveness. Lucy's gayety proved to him how well he had succeeded in it, that interminable morning. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes, usually so gently blue, had a new glint and sparkle.

"You know, Dana, I am not going to be utterly selfish, out here," she presently assured him, with the earnestness that made people want to smile at her. "You must go about with your old friends, too. They will be hurt if you don't. And I shall be tired and want to rest in the afternoons. So you will be perfectly free."

"I don't know that I want to be free, little

Lucy." He spoke more soberly than the occasion warranted, his eyes on his plate. Her glance passed like a secret caress from his rough black hair, so oddly touched with gray, to the broad, overhanging forehead, and the jutting chin with its deep cleft. To any one who loved Dana, his irregular brown face had an appealing beauty.

"I know. But you must remember that you are," she insisted. "I never have little hurt feelings, you know. I could have very big ones, if anything were meant unkindly, but the little ones are only vanity and egotism. Did you know that, Dana? I found it out, once, and so I pulled them all up by the roots. There isn't one left."

He managed to smile at her. "If you see any in me, will you pull them up, too?"

"Ah, you were born big, dearest, big and unconscious: you didn't have to grow big, inch by inch, all by yourself. Not that I have done it, yet; but I am going to be before I die." And she nodded reassuringly, as though to say, "Just wait!" A startled thought that she might have seen how she had hurt his ideal of her, that morning, sharpened his glance.

"What made you think of that now?" he demanded.

"Nothing. I am always thinking about it, one way or another — about bigness and beauty."

The waiter interrupted with the card, but she shook her head. "We don't want anything more, do we?"

"I don't." Dana glanced indifferently at the score offered him, then put down a bill with the gesture that is answered by a gratified bow.

"You know what I wish?" he exclaimed. "That your nice brown hair lifted on a hinge, so that one could look inside now and then and find out just what was going on. It might save us a lot of trouble, Miss Lucy. For I don't suppose you will ever really tell me."

"I will tell you what is going on this minute," she said, putting on her gloves. "I think that you ought to have added up the score, to see if it was right, and I think you gave too large a tip for a little lunch." She smiled to show that it did not really matter, this time, but Dana was too deeply disappointed to respond. Whatever might be in her thoughts, she evidently had no conception of what was lying so heavily in his.

"And now the Chinese shops," she demanded, rising. "Don't you think it would be nice if we took a present to Candy?"

His agreement was so radiant, so lit with relief, that she wondered over it.

"You are very fond of Candy, aren't you?" she said, a little wistfully, as they went up the street.

"Well, when you think —— !" he reminded her.

"But she knows you better than I do." Lucy sighed, then laughed at herself. "I married you, anyway," she said.

"You certainly did," he assented gravely. He could not play the little game of love to-day.

As Lucy had said, they had known each other only in the country, where there was no buying and selling. Their hour in the Chinese shops was a period of torture to Dana; for Lucy simply could not buy. She was like a timid wayfarer with a chasm to jump — she came again and again to the edge, but her heart always failed her before the leap could be taken. The ancestral voice thundered in her ears, and, believing that it spoke wisdom and duty, she gave troubled heed. From an embroidered silken robe, tinted like an opal, that would have been a joy to the end of Candace's days, she came down, lingeringly, distressfully, through hangings and table squares, to a modest cushion cover, and Dana, who yesterday could have run the affair with joyous authority, to-day stood at one side and took no part.

"You don't help me at all," she complained. "Don't you think she would like that?"

The cover was pretty enough, and he said so, dryly, then stood at the shop door until she joined him, the little package in her hand.

"Poor dear, he doesn't like shopping," she mur-

mured, and her cheek contrived to brush his shoulder as they went out.

He would have told Lucy what he had to tell her on their return to the hotel, but recollection of an appointment with Sam Bynner made him hurry off to his old friend's rooms with the "Children's Crusade" music under his arm. There, for two absorbed, utterly happy hours, he was conscious only of his work and of his master's enthusiasm. Fragile as Mr. Bynner was, obviously breaking, his spirit rose up luminously to meet this call. The keen challenge of his criticism, the breadth and certainty of his knowledge, gave Dana a thrilled sense that the key to greatness lay there between them in that shabby old room.

"What a wonder you are, Sam Bynner," he exclaimed, when at last a striking clock startled him to his feet. "And where should I be if you hadn't —— " He laid his hands on the other's shoulders, leaving the sentence unfinished in words.

Age was visibly creeping back over the upright figure that had cast it off for two triumphant hours. Mr. Bynner slipped into the nearest chair, letting his head drop with a fine air of casualness against its back.

"It was a great privilege. And this afternoon — well, I feel that I can go in peace, Dana. We have succeeded, you and I."

"Don't talk of going!"

"No, of course not, dear boy." The remote, detached smile of the day before was in his eyes. "But when I do, you will remember about Luis?"

"I will give him the chance that you gave me."

"Good, good. He's worth it. We will have him here some afternoon. And we'll have another session with the music?"

"All you can stand. And you must meet Lucy." The forgotten day reasserted itself, chilling his joy. "I must be off," he said. "Good night, Sam Bynner." They smiled over the name: the small Dana had never called his teacher anything else.

"Come soon, Dana. The time is so short."

"Oh, we may stay several weeks," said Dana reassuringly from the stairs.

He went back by the same car line that he had taken after his morning's adventure. That was not nine hours ago; and yet he felt as if a year had elapsed since a crazy sentimentalist had bought inaccessible real estate with his wife's resources.

"Rich man? I'm not. I'm a boy with money in his pocket," he decided wearily. Then his hand tightened on the package of music. "I've got that," he muttered.

He opened his door nerved to make his confession and to take without flinching the surprise, the questions, the troubled warnings that he had so

richly earned. Lucy was lying down, with windows darkened, one arm across her eyes, but she waved her hand to show that she was awake. Dana spoke abruptly from the middle of the room.

"Lucy, I made an idiot of myself this morning. I have hated to tell you. I went off before breakfast for a look at my old home. It's a shanty now, perched up on a cliff — of no earthly value. And I bought it." Her eyes were fixed on him with strained intentness from under her arm, but she said nothing. He plunged on, his tone dry, almost hostile. "The people who owned it saw me coming and thought I was a buyer; they had old 'For Sale' signs about. There was a sick-looking man and his wife and two children. When I explained why I was there, they seemed — cut up. They wanted to sell it and go to live in the South for his health. The doctor had said — well, I guess he had to go before winter, if it was to be any use. The woman was unhappy. Anyway, I made a crazy fool of myself. I left a check with the agent and he's making out the papers. I can't go back on it now."

Lucy had risen on one elbow. "Why, you did right, you did exactly right," she cried. "You couldn't have done otherwise. Tell me more — tell me everything."

"Lucy, you love! I thought you'd hate me!" He flung himself down beside her, all impetuous

boy again. "You see, I was so happy, and I felt so — so — I never had had any money before, and it had all gone to my head. And they were desperate, Lucy. If you had seen them when I said I hadn't come to buy! Even the kids. And they were so nice — the man didn't say a word. Just went back into the house. But the poor woman couldn't help telling me, and some way, I felt as if it might be you — she was rounded, and gentle, and just breaking with trouble. A few hundred dollars did seem so little. And if you could have seen her afterward! But, my dearest, it was a very bad purchase from any other standpoint. You realize that?" He lifted his head to look into her eyes, and found them wet.

"What does that matter, Dana! I am glad, glad you did it. And you worried about that?"

"Yes."

She drew him to her with an intensity that startled him. Then he felt her tremble, and a sob shook her from head to foot.

"Lucy! What is it?" He held her close, wrung with distress. "Tell me, love. Oh, don't, don't!"

"O Dana!" She had mastered herself in a moment, but she could not wait till her voice was steady. "All day long you have been so — so depressed, down underneath — oh, you were so dear and cheerful on top, it nearly killed me! For

I thought that perhaps you were bored; that taking me about wasn't as much fun as you had thought it would be; that perhaps you wanted to be alone or to go to your old friends. Oh, I didn't know what to think! I wouldn't face it until I was here by myself. I pretended everything was all right; but after you had gone and I couldn't pretend any more — O Dana, I nearly died!"

Her misery so tore him that he took refuge in indignant words, spoken between tokens of abject tenderness. "I never heard anything so silly, Lucy Cuyler, you ought to be shaken! Don't you know, don't you *know?*" She drew a long, broken sigh.

"I knew this morning, but it didn't help me a bit when you — changed. And to think that it was all that absurd lot! O Dana!"

Guilty knowledge that it was not all the absurd lot made him hide his face in her dress, lest it betray him. An older man, or one less in love, might have found words then to tell her everything; but Dana could as easily have struck her.

"Don't think about it any more," he implored; but Lucy could not forget her terror.

"I wish we could run away," she exclaimed. "The idea of going out into those same streets to-morrow — couldn't we go away now and come back later? Would that be too cowardly?"

He looked at his watch. "How long would it take you to pack?"

"Why, dearest, I haven't unpacked yet." She had started up, shining with eagerness.

"All right. Get ready while I look up trains."

They sprang to their feet, and Dana hurried down to the office, so moved at the way Lucy had taken his rash act that he forgot to wonder how he might have fared had he told his tale in the first enthusiasm of the morning. He was glad to run away with her, glad to do anything on earth that would make her happy: they could come back later in the trip for their real visit to the beloved town. In twenty short minutes, gay with the rush of their preparations, they and their luggage and an armful of roses were being whirled to the southern express.

They had planned to "do" the South like other travellers, but, after a few days' wandering, fate, knowing a better thing than that, led them into the Garden of Eden and left them there for their real honeymoon. A cottage, perched between a blue-black mountain and a radiant sea, complete even to a piano and a cook, offered itself to them for a month. Twenty-four hours later Dana was working at music in the big living-room and Lucy was painting in the garden, and the world of cities and of mortal hurts was wiped out and forgotten. Cool nights, crisp mornings, hot noons, evenings silver

splashed with stars without, ruddy with firelight within, swept them round the seasons in miniature every twenty-four hours: work cleverly drew them apart in the morning, that they might come together with a new rush of joy. They strolled in the garden and planned excursions that they were too happy to take; they brought out books and were too happy to read them; and the great St. Bernard, who completed the perfection of their setting, thumped his tail on the porch beside them or laid his heavy head on their knees and loved them unspeakably. Day after day, life stood still at one glorious point, and they forgot that Paradise had every known a serpent.

A minute velocipede in a corner of the porch, games, and picture books, a battered rag doll and an appealing little bed in the room off theirs, reconstructed for them a small personage whom Dana called little Frederick and Lucy as persistently referred to as little Susan. They argued the case daily, considering it a point of honour not to ask the cook nor to examine the fly leaves of the picture books. The lack of a second small bed denied the possibility of both.

"Who ever heard of giving a girl a velocipede?" Dana was loud in his certainty. "She might ride an old one of her brother's; but there is no sign of a big brother, is there?"

"But the doll! The doll!" Lucy protested,

her eyes gleaming with laughter, but her mouth as firm as his.

"That might be left over from babyhood. Why, I had one myself, and loved it without shame slept with it until I was three years old. My mother has often said so. You know where we found it, forgotten in an old bottom drawer."

"But how do you explain the pink hair ribbon I found in the lilac bushes?"

"And how do you explain the broken cellar window and the ball inside? Does a girl throw balls at windows? I ask you that!"

Lucy turned to the St. Bernard, stretched in the path at their feet.

"Sahib, if it is a little girl, wag your tail," she coaxed, and of course the tail responded.

"Sahib, if it is a boy, speak!" commanded Dana with a suddenness that brought an obedient "W'f!" from the great throat. Then they both broke down into laughter. "I'll tell you what," Dana went on; "suppose we make a surprise for little Frederick down in the garden. We might build a cave where those stones are, below the Norfolk Island pine."

"I think litt! usan would rather have a rockery," Lucy objected, 'with ferns growing on it."

"Oh, no, she wouldn't. Girls like caves." Dana lifted her bodily from the steps where they had

been sitting. "She can call it a grotto; she'll love that. Come on!"

They ran down the garden with an enthusiasm that roused Sahib to mammoth gambols. Under the flat, layered branches of the pine a thin ledge of rock jutted out, suggesting wonderful cave possibilities, and they joyfully fell to work digging out the ground beneath and building up the sides with stones. Lucy was forbidden to touch the heavy slabs, but was allowed to pave the cave's floor, and started a charming mosaic of light and dark stones, lying flat on the sunned earth with arms bare to the elbow and amusingly dirty. Dana, bare-armed also and presently collarless, toiled over his walls with single-minded absorption. Far below them, through pine branches, glimmered the sea, and behind them loomed the treeless, lifeless mountain, purple black in the waning afternoon. The world was all their own, and labour was good.

"I wish we had some moss to plant about the edge," Lucy said, after a long, busy silence. "Little girls always love moss. And they love tiny paths. We can make one of pine needles, and border it with white stones, leading into the cave."

"Oh, no. The way in must be secret, almost unfindable," Dana declared. "There must be a pile of brush against the outside."

"Frederick would use that for a bonfire, first thing you knew."

"Then Frederick would get spanked."

"Oh, no, Dana." She straightened up in sudden earnestness. "People don't punish children bodily any more. It isn't necessary, and it isn't right. That is all being done away with. Why, I never was struck in my life!"

"Imagine slapping you!" He laughed, and, all earthy as he was, took her into his arms, kissing every gentle curve of her upturned face. "It would be like boxing the ears of the Sistine Madonna. But, just the same, a little Frederick has to mind his daddy without arguing," he added, going back to his work. Lucy, suddenly idle, sat watching him as he loosened the edges of a stone and pried it up with strong, sure movements. The very frown on his absorbed face seemed to mark him the master — master of earth and stones, master of the heart that loved him. She bent her head and secretly kissed her wedding ring.

There was a boyish shout of triumph. Dana let his stone drop back and dived for a small object that had rolled out from under its edge. "Well, what do you think of that! Now, Miss Lucy, what do you say — is it Frederick or Susan?" And he held up before her a weather-beaten lead soldier.

"Girls can play with soldiers," said Lucy, but feebly.

"They can, but they don't. I'm going to put this up in your room, to cure you of obstinacy and of arguing against your husband. Little Susan and lead soldiers! I think not."

"Pink hair ribbons!" insisted Lucy, in the tone of one who, though drowning, still cries, "Scissors!" It was all very foolish, and untranslatably good.

The nights grew sharper. Black clouds full of rain occasionally came down over the mountain and kept them prisoners for a day. The last roses were blown from their stalks. The time for city pavements and city lights was coming, but they shrank from acknowledging it, dimly aware that they should leave paradise behind.

"If we are going to Mexico —— " Lucy finally attacked the subject. Dana was experimenting with chords on the piano, and did not answer until he had achieved what he wanted. Then he spoke without looking round.

"Why go to Mexico?"

"Suppose we don't!" But her look of bright relief faded as he added, "I'd rather have the extra time in San Francisco myself."

"It would be simpler to go straight home from here," she said impulsively.

"And not visit the city at all?" He faced her in such consternation that she had to retract and explain.

"Of course not, dear! We can't miss that for anything. Only it seemed a pity to go back on our tracks that long way. And one does spend so much, living in hotels."

The gate through which they were to pass out was swinging back. Nothing more was said that night, but their lease of the cottage was nearly over, and to Lucy the subject was by no means closed. The secret dread of walking up to it again lay upon her so heavily, for twenty-four hours, that she did not realize how Dana's high spirits had dropped. They separated as usual for the morning, but little work was done. After lunch Lucy made an excuse for not following him into the garden, but presently laid down her pretence of sewing and marched herself out with stern reproaches for her cowardice. A swaying in the branches of an aged pepper tree and a sound of hammering showed where Dana was.

"I thought I'd make a seat for little Frederick," he explained, as she paused beneath. "Come up and see how nice it is." Bodily work had pushed aside depression. He held down his hand to her, and Lucy mounted to the place where a fork in the tough, slender limbs, bridged across, made a rocking seat, half reclining, hung about with clusters of pungent, rose-red berries and milky, bright green leaves. She was established in the seat, and swayed approvingly.

"Little Susan will love it," she said, and they smiled over the challenge. "Suppose we go up to the house and settle it now," she added.

Dana had an inspiration. "Suppose we never find out at all! A family ought to keep one healthy, impersonal quarrel on hand: it saves them from quarrelling about nearer things. When I get on your nerves, you can attack me about Frederick and relieve your mind to any extent. What do you say?"

Lucy's heart was thudding so uneasily over her errand that her assent was rather breathless.

"I think that would be beautiful. I couldn't bear to give up little Susan: she is such a dear little girl."

"Frederick's a nice kid," said Dana, and then a pause gave her the dreaded opportunity. She took it bravely.

"Dearest! I have been thinking and thinking about — when we leave here. You know, our lease is up in three days." He nodded, seating himself on a neighbouring branch, but said nothing. "Should you mind very much if we went straight home?"

He was pulling off thin scales of bark with minute care. "It seems rather a pity — to leave out the chief thing we came to see," he said gravely, almost indifferently.

"Yes; but we can come back another year — perhaps next year — and make it a visit all to itself. And, of course, I did see it a little. We might come out some time and take a house; and then we should see everything, and meet your friends so comfortably. If they are as nice as Candy, I have got to know them, sooner or later. But now I truly think we ought to go home."

"Just as you say, Lucy."

She was flushed with relief at his easy acquiescence. "That is dear of you! You see, there is that big house, full of idle servants, and the horses being boarded; it's bills, bills, all the time. And when one stays at hotels —— " She broke off with a sigh, in her face a strained, anxious look, the meaning of which he had already learned. He knew now that she did not spend a fourth of her big income; but there was nothing to say. He started up.

"I will go down and telegraph about mail," he said. "If you have any messages —— "

Ten minutes later he strode off, Sahib at his heels. It was three hours before they came back, dusty and weary.

"We took a long tramp," he explained. "Oh, and I engaged our passage while I was at the station. Have I time for a bath?"

His face was grave and tired, and Lucy, troubled,

only half understanding either herself or him, believing what she had done to be right and necessary, fell eagerly on the little chance to serve his comfort.

"I will have dinner kept back," she said, "as long as you like. Don't hurry, dear!"

CHAPTER SIX

THE music room offered a wide stretch of glass to the swirling snow, but its panes had been carefully doubled, and below it ran an array of heating pipes that would have seemed exaggerated to any one unacquainted with the wind that comes over the Back Bay. Heavy velvet curtains hung ready to be pulled across as soon as the light failed, and generous logs in the open fireplace were prepared to add their picture of warmth to the hardly won fact. It was a pleasant room, made harmonious by use and time, though its furnishings would have warred had they been new. No Cuyler ever gave up — or, if possible, moved — a piece of furniture, so the taste of several generations was represented, buttoned satin and gold legs lying down with puffy leather on spiral springs, carved Renaissance neighbouring peacefully with weathered Mission. If a decorator would have shuddered, any home-lover must have felt it mellow and inviting, imbued with a reality impossible to rooms that are made up on paper and carried out by rule. Four o'clock had just struck, but the light was already so dim that

Dana, working at a table drawn up beside the piano, had to bend close to his manuscript. He glanced vaguely at the lamp, but would not stop to light it. His eyes looked tired, but his mouth had taken a line of dogged persistence.

The last two months had wrought a subtle change in Dana Malone. Candace, watching him keenly during a brief visit, had realized that one familiar trait had disappeared: he no longer made excited discoveries. His old, "Do you know, Candy!" and the, "I tell you!" with emphatic forefinger had vanished, and in their place had come a new abstractedness. It was as if one absorbing major discovery had swallowed all the minor ones. Lucy complained to her family that he worked all the time, but was obviously a little proud of her grievance. They had accepted Dana with a better grace than might have been expected — perhaps from a general conviction that Lucy was bound to do something queer, anyway; and though the younger members pri ately referred to her as Mrs. Mulloney and found therein much cause for laughter, they all liked Dana as well as they could have liked any one who had grown up in a different tradition and whose forebears had not attended school with their forebears. Yet neither their well-meant tolerance nor the friendly advances of brother musicians could reach Dana's submerged

attention: he seemed to have no interest for new ties.

The door opened to admit a head and a protest.

"Are you never going to stop, Dana?" Then, seeing how dim the light was, Lucy came in to take charge of the situation. Her arms were full of packages, which she dropped on a sofa. "My dear boy, you can't see! Wait till I light a lamp. Do you want to ruin your eyes?"

Lucy was changed, too. As she busied herself with the lamp, her cheerfulness was uneasy, as though it stoutly denied an inner fear; her briskness could not hide the fact that she was covertly watching him. He leaned back with a stretch of weary arms, letting his eyelids drop defensively over his eyes.

"It is dark," he admitted.

When she had arranged the lights to suit her, she paused by his chair, pretending to study the manuscript.

"How goes it?" she asked. She had picked up several of his phrases, and they contrasted so curiously with her superfine personality and gently bred voice that Candace, during her visit, had more than once been moved to unexplained laughter.

"All right, I suppose." He dropped his head against her arm. "I'm too tired to know."

"Why do you work so hard?" The question was

only a reproach at first, but, when he did not answer, she repeated it with startled emphasis: "Dana, why do you work so hard?" His eyes fell away from her troubled look.

"Well, for one thing, I think I ought to have some output to show soon," he offered tentatively. "Don't you think yourself that I'd better let the family see ——?"

"But the family is all right. Why, they have been so nice to you, Dana!"

"No — have they?" with a feeble attempt at humour.

"Why, my dear, they have all had us to dinner, and asked you to play -- I think they have been very nice indeed."

"So they have. Only — well, we do it a little differently at home: that's all. It would be perfectly natural if they hated me," he added indifferently. "I should think they would."

"Cousin Susie said you had a very charming smile and manner," Lucy insisted. "Aunt Margaret was a little short, but, Dana dear, that was your own fault."

"I only said that Mt. Vernon Street was steep!"

"I know; but she has lived on Mt. Vernon Street all her life, and her people before her, and it was like criticising her own home to her, don't you see?"

"But — but — " Then Dana choked down his

sputtering protest. "I'm a Yahoo," he murmured contritely. What else mustn't I say?"

"You shall say anything on earth you like!" She was suddenly all on his side. "I am so *proud* of you, Dana. And when you play, you are so beautiful, I can't take my eyes off you!"

The outburst moved him to laughter, but it also cheered and refreshed him. Presently they lit the fire—there were four able-bodied servants gossiping in the basement, but Lucy rarely rang a bell—and sat down on the hearth rug with her packages between them. She had been Christmas shopping, and displayed her gifts with a satisfaction too secure to be critical of his response. A bankrupt sale had furnished Irish lace for several cousins, an unimportant defect had made a bronze inkstand exactly the thing for Aunt Lizzie, while a chocolate pot of Royal Worcester, miraculously reduced, had been discovered for Cousin Susie, who was devoted to china.

"I had to give her something very nice, she was so dear about living with me," Lucy explained, holding up the pot for admiration. "Wasn't it luck that they would sell it without the cups?"

"But I should think it needed the cups;" Dana spoke worriedly.

"Oh, but they are very expensive. Perhaps I will give them to her next year." And she turned

contentedly to a big parcel in which many sm. articles had been sent. There were swirling paper knives of greenish metal that left a brassy odour on the hands, crudely embroidered neckwear sewn into unlaunderable shapes, blue and green jewellery of the kind that has been called home-made, glass bottles with thin silver-gilt tops, brocade frames for photographs — a lapful of the things that must be created solely as gifts, since no man or woman would ever dream of buying them for personal use.

"They are only Christmas tokens, you see;" she was beginning to be depressed by his lack of enthusiasm. "They don't pretend to be anything else."

"But why not?" he asked impulsively. "It would be so much more fun to give them things they'd love, Lucy!"

"But, my dear boy, you don't realize the number of them. Look at that!" She held up a long list before him, and believed him convinced, since he said nothing further. "I have a little thing here for Candy," she went on. "Of course, the cushion cover was her real present: she wouldn't expect anything more. But I wanted something for Christmas Day. Here it is. Shall I say it is from us both?"

Dana took the little red blotting pad, still marked $1.10, and slowly turned it over before eyes that

did not seem to be looking at it. Then he laid it down and rose to his feet.

"No, don't say it is from me, too," he said, returning to his work. "I'll find her something — or write her a letter."

"If there is anything here that you would like to give ——" Lucy motioned generously to her whole assortment, but he would not look.

"Thanks, I'll find — something," he said absently. Believing that genius burned, she sat very still, not even gathering up her possessions lest the sound disturb him. She held his work always in passionate respect.

Dana had lately put aside his ambitious suite and thrown himself headlong into the Celtic songs that had come down to him with his talent from his grandfather. They had grown wonderfully under his hand, taking on a depth and richness that would have startled old Brian Malone, fiddling with easy sentiment for an earnestly staring little boy. Perhaps, if Dana had been wholly happy, he could not have done so well. He was bent over the manuscript now, but he was not working. From behind his hand he could see Lucy's unconscious profile, rosy with firelight, the earnest sweetness of her mouth, the gravity and beauty that lay about her eyes — and, over all, some new shadow. Even sitting on a hearth rug, she kept her youthful-

princess quality, her beloved little air of decorum: so fine she looked, so fragrant, so ennobled with high meanings, and yet, someway, so touched with pathos, that presently he came abruptly back to her.

"What can I do for you, on all the earth?" he asked, his hands on her shoulders. She lifted smiling lips, and the troubled question, the secret strain of a dread stoutly denied, faded as he kissed her.

"You do love me," she said quickly.

"Yes." Oaths could not have made the simple assent more convincing. She clung to him with breathless intensity. Then,

"Play 'Mary Alone,'" she whispered.

She did not ask for it often: it had meant too much to both of them. At the first bar, she could feel the cool breath of dark June woods on her face and her heart throbbing against her side; the dim path that had led her to the full glory of life was under her daring feet. As Dana played it, its wild melancholy usually fell on her ears like an exquisite refinement of joy, a longing that is on the verge of fulfilment, and she leaned back now with closed eyes to let it take her where it would. But presently her eyes opened with a start. He was playing it with new meaning, and its sadness was no longer the mere veil of joy. Deep was calling unto deep,

and Lucy, hearing, grew frightened at the blind appeal. A darkness that she had never before fully seen lay on his face.

"Dana! Nothing is as sad as that!" she cried as his hands fell away from the keys. "Oh, don't play it that way — don't! Oh, what is it?"

The look vanished and he laughed at her, swinging into an Irish jig.

"I only tried it in another key, little Lucy," he apologized. "I won't do it again."

He was so cheerful, so contrite, that she had to accept his explanation; but the moment was not obliterated. She wrapped her packages in silence, then laid them down with a sigh.

"What shall we give each other for Christmas?" she asked idly.

"Silver and gold. Jewels. Fur coats and automobiles. Everything heart can wish." He flung it out with a laugh that hid a touch of impatience.

"No; but I mean seriously," she urged. "Do you like fur-lined gloves?"

"No," said Dana, turning back to the piano.

"You should say, 'No, thank you, Lucy.' Isn't there some music you want?"

"I don't believe so — thank you, Lucy."

"You are very unsatisfactory. Do give me a suggestion."

Dana was making discordant sounds with the

keys. "Why not a necktie?" he asked, and then was ashamed of himself.

"But you have so many," she answered quite simply. "Besides, that would not be enough. What shall you give me?"

"A bottle of cologne and a box of candy."

"Is that a joke?"

He rose. "My dear Lucy," he explained, trying to speak lightly, "giving you handsome presents with your own money doesn't seem to be quite suitable; and I have exactly twelve dollars of my very own in the world. It came from the sale of my furniture and effects, after I left New York. You are therefore going to get exactly twelve dollars' worth of Christmas from me — no more and no less."

"Twelve dollars will buy a very nice present indeed," she declared. "But the money is yours, dearest, just as much as it is mine. You must not speak as if it weren't. You have only to take what you want."

"Good little Lucy," was the vague answer, and he turned as though to leave the room, then came slowly back. "Do you know, my dear," he began, standing over her with hands in his pockets, "I think perhaps a man has to earn his own living? I didn't suppose it would matter, so long as I worked, and we loved each other. But I'm afraid it does." No casual tone or careless attitude could

mask the momentousness of what he said; and the secret fright was out in Lucy's lifted face.

"But that isn't fair, Dana!" she broke in, so hotly that he paused in surprise. "No, it is not fair! My dear boy, you don't always know the value of money; and because I do, because I've had to speak about it — ah, it is not fair to be so sensitive, to make that a barrier between us! I have learned a hundred things from you, so gladly. Why shouldn't you learn that one thing from me?" The protest must have been long in her heart, to come rushing out so fluently. Dana stood helpless and miserable before it.

"We see things — differently, Lucy. We can't help it. I want to go to work. Don't make it hard for me." His gentleness, and the note of pain in his voice, took the fight out of her for the moment. She drooped bodily.

"What would you do?" she asked when the silence had become unbearable.

"Nothing very big or conspicuous. Perhaps I can get music criticism to do for one of the papers — and you would like going to the concerts. I might take a pupil or two. I shan't try to help you run the house!" He tried to lighten the tension with a laugh. "But I must at least fill my own pockets. I guess it's a law of nature, dear, and we're up against it."

"And all the time you weren't doing those things, you would be at your music," she said heavily. "I should see nothing at all of you."

He dropped down beside her, taking her into his arms. "But, when we are together, won't it be better than it has been lately?" he asked against her cheek. "We haven't been very happy, have we? With things frank and settled between us" he drew her closer and closer — "isn't three minutes of this better than half a day of strained politeness?"

She turned her face away from his. "It is not fair," she said unsteadily. "It isn't big of you. If you can't take, you can't give you said that yourself. And I won't consent to it — I won't forgive it." She broke away from him and ran out of the room.

Dana did not go to work. For three days the issue lay silent between them, taking the light out of the sunshine, the savour out of their food, the joy out of their love. Lucy was very cheerful, very interested in everything that came up, determined to prove that she stood firmly planted on common sense and that the heart in her side was not one fathomless ache. Dana, not belonging to the sex that pretends, was frankly melancholy, and gave her little help in her effort after a bright surface. It was she who opened the topic again, marching herself bravely up to it after dinner on the third night.

"Have you given up that idea of going to work, Dana?" she asked, standing in front of him, her coffee cup in her hand.

"Oh, no. I have looked about a little," he admitted. "I haven't found anything yet."

"But have you realized all sides of it?" She was determined to appear entirely calm and logical and mature. "For one thing, dear, we have a number of engagements ahead. Suppose we had to throw over some one's dinner because you had a concert to write up? They wouldn't understand: they couldn't."

"No, I suppose not," he assented, so spiritlessly that she grew bolder.

"And the wastefulness of it, Dana! Why, when you worked nearly all the time in New York what did you earn? Wasn't it just a few dollars?"

"Yes."

"Then, with only a part of your time — can't you see that it wouldn't be worth while?"

"Perhaps;" he seemed to have physical difficulty in producing his voice. "Not worth while as a financial proposition, I admit. But, Lucy" — for an instant his clouded eyes looked straight into hers — "I want to."

The flesh visibly softened toward him, but her mind stood firm.

"But you can't want to do things when you know better, can you, my dearest boy?"

"I don't know better. I think it would be good for me. I'd be nicer about the house."

"But that is absurd. And it's unkind." Her voice quivered. "Refusing to use what I have to give you — it's refusing me, don't you see?" The troubled woman in her suddenly overrode the calm logician. Turning swiftly from him, she put down her cup and walked away, her palms driven against her cheeks. "I'm losing you!"

The frightened whisper broke through his apathy and touched him on the quick. He could not stand out against it. Shame at having so hurt her swept him to his feet, and he drew her back to the big chair with remorseful vehemence.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," he stammered, his face buried in her dress. "I love you, Lucy — I'm sorry. I won't do anything you hate. Please forgive me."

Though she clung to him, she would not accept victory except as a triumph of the right.

"It isn't because I hate it," she insisted. "That would be no reason — oh, I love you; I would die for you! But because it would be foolish and wrong-headed, Dana."

"All right, dear," he assented humbly, his lips against hers.

The sunshine was back in the world for Lucy, but Dana, after a day or two of restored cheerfulness,

began to feel dissatisfied, even a little ashamed. He could not have done differently; yet his manhood was resentful. The shears of Delilah seemed to be sounding in his ears. A desire to assert himself interfered with his work and made him restless. Two days before Christmas he went downtown with determination in his gait; yet, after all, he came back empty-handed. For how could he send Candace a lovely old necklace when Lucy had already sent her a small red blotting pad? And the same restraint held him with others: an outer loyalty to his wife's acts was demanded of him, and tied his hands. He relieved his feelings by giving a dollar to a whining beggar woman at his own door, and was not sorry that Lucy, coming out, should catch him in the act.

"My dear boy!" she protested from the step above him. "She is an old impostor. I have seen her begging for years."

"Of course she is," he assented cheerfully. "But don't you suppose that even impostors get cold and hungry sometimes, just like honest people?" To his surprise, she laughed.

"I think that woman probably owns blocks of houses; but you are a love," she said, smiling down on him so warmly that he was ashamed of his petulant act, ashamed that she should read beauty into it. He put his hands into her muff.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To sit with Aunt Lizzie. She is so forlorn; her rheumatism hasn't let her out for a week."

"Come and sit with me instead."

"Ah, I can't disappoint her, sweetheart. She counts on me."

"So do I. I'm lonely. And I want a good time."

"What kind of a good time?"

"I want to do something loud and spectacular for somebody who needs it awfully."

"My dear! It has been subscriptions and donations and —— "

"Oh, I know: checks by mail. For institutions. That is great, of course. But I mean something close up, to one person, so that we get a glow out of it. I want to feel Christmasy."

"Do you mean the ragged child with its nose against the shop window?"

"Not at all. I propose that we dash on to New York and buy a picture of Palmer Jacks — and all of little Willing's pottery. What do you say?"

She did not dream that he really meant it. "I say that you are quite mad, but a love, just the same," she assured him.

"But, Lucy, really, why couldn't we?" he persisted. "If the things are too bad to give away, we can put them in a guest-room, you know!" There was a gentle gibe in that, but she did not heed

it. A worried line was creeping about her lips. "Just think how bursting happy it would make them," he begged. "Can't you see little Willing ——? I know he has an awful time. Oh, come on, Looshy!"

Her brightness had faded. "But so many people have awful times, Dana. There is no sense in helping one individual;" she spoke almost impatiently. "If we could do something for all the Willings — but we can't. Now I must go, dear. Will you come with me?"

"No. I think not," he said, and shut the door on her in troubled humility.

"Am I a fool? A crazy sentimentalist?" he asked of his silent, sober home. "People who know how to be rich — don't they ever go out and make one person roaring happy, just for the joy of it? Isn't that legitimate?" The house had no answer for him; big as it was, it seemed to cramp him. He foresaw years in it with his real self pacing behind bars, silent but unsubdued, and a despairing anger swept over him. "I want to be my kind! I want to do things my way!" he muttered.

Lucy's parents had always taken Christmas dinner with the Stephen Cuylers. Other branches of the family assembled at the Mortimer Cuylers', where there was more youth and merriment, but Lucy

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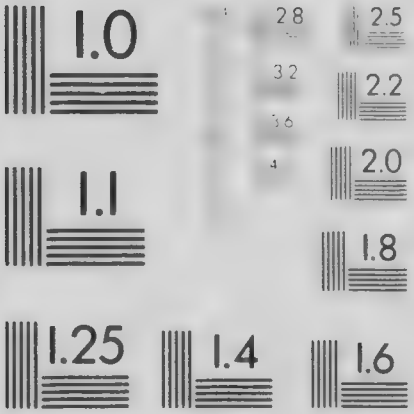

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was unquestioningly loyal to the tradition of the past. The dinner was held at the somewhat ungenial hour of three o'clock, and they turned reluctantly from the bells and brightness outside to the engulfing gloom of the lofty front hall. The dark, solemn old house had put a prim wreath or two in its windows, where they hung like a respectful echo of Aunt Margaret's earrings. The older, more conservative element of the family was represented, for the more brilliant or worldly members went firmly to the Mortimer Cuylers', and, but for two "girls" of withered youth, only Dana and Lucy were under forty. The assembled guests, sitting or standing about the drawing-room, showed to Western eyes a curious shyness with one another. They were all related and had grown up or old together, yet a pall of self-consciousness lay over them. They went out to dinner awkwardly, over-smiling, with repeated steppings on trailing skirts. After the stimulation of finding their places was used up, silences settled chillingly down at every pause.

Aunt Margaret always sat like a policeman at the gates of conversation, challenging, correcting, and rebuking, an attitude which would naturally check its flow in her immediate neighbourhood; but, even at a safe distance, there was no movement. Brief remarks were offered, shy questions and smiling

answers, but no social fluid was generated to blend the company; the elements stayed dry and distinct. Lucy, obliged to speak across the table, blushed to her eyes. For the most part, with slightly bent heads and constrained elbows, they ate.

Had it been a rural shyness, Dana, out of his good humour and his inborn ease, could have caught hold, flung topics and gayety right and left until everybody was taking part and the day was saved. But instinct told him that this urban shyness was of another breed, and that the young outsider who attempted to come to its aid would be smartly put in his place and frozen there. It might even be a part of the firm, "We do it," which had more than once dropped squarely across the path of his inquiries. He tried to content his soul with the excellence of the food, but the desire to do something — even to break something — grew on him intolerably.

Aunt Lizzie, on his right, had her deaf ear toward him, so, after the whole table had heard him repeat three times the hope that her rheumatism was better, he turned exasperatedly to Cousin Amy on his left. But Cousin Amy considered it queer for a man to be a musician, and much worse than queer for him to have no producible antecedents, and though she responded pleasantly enough, she maintained her principles by keeping her face averted.

It is hard to talk with enthusiasm to a profile, and Dana, abandoning that, sent a glance of despair down the table to Lucy.

It was in that moment that a new knowledge was given to Dana Malone: he saw with his own eyes the solidarity of Family. Lucy sat as the others sat, her shyness was their shyness, her reserves, scruples, complications were woven through them all: her relation to him was incidental compared to the bond that held her to them. Between him and them lay a hopeless gulf: they could never really understand one another; what meant an anguish of boredom to him had some obscure ceremonial value to them, and his natural methods of enjoyment would be wholly alien to their sympathies. Lucy had crossed to his side for a few free and joyous months, but, to his dismayed glance, it seemed now that they were inexorably taking her back to themselves. This repressed, anxious, dutiful guest bore no relation to the blossoming, expanding girl to whom he had made love on the hills of Sky Farm. She was not comfortable, but she was not finding the occasion horrible, as he was. She felt no rebellion. Twenty years from now she would be sitting there, just as timidly sweet and dutiful, and he —— But there his smothered protest burst up through the impassive surface. Without realizing what he did, he sprang to his feet.

"A toast?" said Aunt Margaret blandly, a hand toward her glass. Her voice and the startled faces about him brought him back to his senses. It was a dreadful moment, but he managed to take up a glass.

"Merry Christmas!" he said feebly, and dropped down into his seat again, holding back a blush by sheer force of will.

They responded courteously, a little surprised, yet ready to accept differences of custom from him. And the ceremony amused and relaxed them. Conversation flowed more easily after that. By dessert, they were all talking, except Dana, who wearily leaned back and watched them with apathetic eyes.

It was evening when they left, other relatives setting them down at their door. Lucy, still fresh and alert, kept her air of content even when they were free and alone again.

"It went off very well, didn't it?" she said, preceding him up the stairs. Dana turned aside into the music room on a muttered excuse and shut the door.

"I'm common," he said with shut teeth. "Common! There are Irish jigs in my blood. My God, if I have to sit through that again, I'll die!"

The domestic life that he had foreseen, the easy hospitality, the singing and laughter, the spon-

taneous pushing back of rugs for a dance, the times of intensified care and tenderness and the joyous baby presences — "my son," "my little girl," — all his dream of home came back in mocking contrast to the smothering formality of that afternoon. The silence of his own house seemed to foreshadow years as socially arid, as secretly melancholy. He began to play, so stormily that presently he found a figure in a kimono standing anxiously beside him. The question in his wife's eyes had to be met. He was ashamed when he saw how he had troubled her.

"Lucy, where's our little Frederick? And our little Susan?" he asked.

"I know! They are very slow about it, aren't they!" She curled down relievedly on the bench beside him.

"Some way or other, there has got to be a Christmas tree in this house by next year," Dana announced with authority.

"With dollies on it," she assented dreamily.

"No; lead soldiers."

They laughed at that. "Ah, weren't we happy, out there?" she added, with a little movement of body and breath that meant regret.

"They always tell you that marriage isn't so easy as it looks:" Dana was answering the sigh. "I guess there's something in it, my dear." The doors between them seemed to be wide open: they

were suddenly as close in spirit as they were in body.

"If only one weren't so puzzled," she said eagerly. "If one could know just what the other — and what was right and fair — ah, if one knew!"

A startled vision of a new possibility, of everything between them put bravely into words, held him silent. Moved and open as he was, he might have made the attempt then, for good or ill, if a housemaid had not interrupted with wood for the fire. Lucy watched her build it up with an uneasy frown.

"Not so much, Kate," she exclaimed. "Look, you can make it burn with half that." She took active charge, rescuing several sticks for future use. When the modest blaze was started and the maid had gone, she came back to Dana, dusting her hands.

"Servants are so wasteful," she protested. Dana's mind admitted the truth of the complaint, but his heart chilled before its distressed utterance. For an instant the grinding spirit of old Adrian Cuyler had looked out at him.

Christmas was not over with the passing of the day. For a week afterward, a new frostiness, faint but unmistakable, was exhaled from the older members of the family in Dana's presence. He could scarcely go down the street without meeting a Cuyler, and nearly all of them showed — if only by the emphasized friendliness of the partisan —

that he was being talked over. When he tried to pay Aunt Margaret's carfare, her caustic, "Don't trouble — save your money. I prefer to pay for myself," left him helpless and puzzled. Cousin Susie finally let out the secret. The family was surprised that Dana, so kindly received, had not troubled to send so much as a rose or a calendar to his new relatives. The gift was unimportant, but its omission showed a lack of recognition on his part, a want of well-bred graciousness. Each had thought nothing of it until she discovered that the others had been passed over, too; and it was for the others that she felt the neglect. Kind Cousin Susie was sure that customs varied in different parts of the country and that Christmas presents were not usual where Dana came from, so that he could not be expected to know their significance; but she had thought that perhaps a few New Year's cards and a potted fern for Aunt Margaret might ease the situation, and that was why she had told her dear Lucy. Her dear Lucy, quite pale with anger, had declared that everything she had sent was "from us both, of course" — she had supposed that every one would understand that; and not until Cousin Susie had hurried off with the explanation did she realize that perhaps it was not quite true.

"Why didn't you send a few flowers, Dana?" she asked when she had told him the trouble. "I

hate to have them think you ungracious or ungenerous. Don't you think you should have?"

Dana made no answer at all. She had yearned to share his anger, but, if he felt resentment, he kept it to himself. The family, slightly reactionary after Cousin Susie's zealous round, returned to a charitable tolerance, unconcerned as to what might lie behind the passive courtesy of his response. And Dana, ardent, lonely, wounded, shut himself up in his work and tried to assert that that was the only thing in life that really mattered. As Palmer Jacks had once said, he had not yet learned to laugh.

Truly, the gadflies were out after Dana Malone. Before that sting could be forgotten, a letter from Candace brought a fresh attack. She enclosed a letter from California.

"I thought you ought to see this," she had written. "I hate passing on unpleasant things; but I am so certain there is some good explanation. Write Leila or let me. Of course, I knew there was something, when you wouldn't talk about San Francisco. Now don't retreat into a proud silence, my boy. That is a very bad trick of yours. Good old friends have to be conciliated, even at the cost of explaining to them that you are not an utter fool."

Dana knew with miserable certainty what was coming as he turned to the marked page:

"I don't suppose you see anything of Dana Malone, now that he has married into the first Boston circles. Do you know that he was out here on his wedding trip — people saw him on the street, spoke to him — and he didn't send word to one of his old friends? We can't help being hurt about it. We had heard he was coming, and had planned to give him the warmest kind of a welcome, but evidently it wasn't wanted. It is hard to believe of Dana. I don't see how even money could have changed him like that. Still, there doesn't seem to be any other explanation. If he had wanted to see us, we were right there, and waiting. I must confess, I feel rather sick about it. East is East and West is West — how can you stay in a place that can make people so cold blooded? Come back to us, Candy, before you, too, are spoiled."

Dana read the sheet again and again, and if his old friends could have seen his face, they would have had no room left for their own hurt. Then he put it away and went back to his work. He said nothing about it to Lucy, and he wrote neither to Candace nor to California.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DANA'S naturally expansive spirit, having retreated into itself, made the dangerous discovery that it was easier to stay there. He did everything that Lucy suggested with a spiritless assent that nearly broke her heart: he seemed to have neither impulses nor preferences, so long as he was allowed to work undisturbed. Lucy belonged to her family, not to him. He was a mere incident, a footnote in the family history, and could not expect to affect its course. His own attitude to wealth was maturing. The desire to spend and to give was still in the foreground, but under it was growing a new understanding of the power that lay, unused, in his wife's hands. He had tried, once or twice, to show her what he saw, but, at the first words, Lucy had retreated so uneasily that he had given up. It was better to keep to his rôle of passive outsider. He knew, dimly, that he was not behaving very well, but he was young and hurt, and there was solace in the specious dignity of his attitude. The Celtic songs were finished, but he did not send them to his publisher, some

vague premonition impelling him to "keep them on hand."

"I'll take them to New York myself some day," he explained to Lucy. "I may want to make some different arrangement about them — sell them outright or something. You can't tell." Laid in a drawer, they were tangible assets, convertible property. He turned a key on them with grave satisfaction, and buried himself in his "Children's Crusade" without a day's holiday. He would have stayed buried in it indefinitely if a belated notice of a thousand-dollar prize, offered for an orchestral piece by an American composer, had not roused Lucy to excited hope.

"It isn't the money," she urged, fighting bravely against his apathy. "Think of having it played by one of the finest orchestras in the country! O Dana, the night we went on to hear it — wouldn't you nearly die of joy?"

"But nobody ever wins in competitions," he objected. "Nobody you know, that is. Besides, it closes in — let me see — ten days."

"Well, you have practically finished it. You could potter over it for twenty years longer, but it is really done, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is, after a fashion."

"And you can get help on the mechanical work. Come and play it," she insisted.

Dana obeyed unwillingly, but presently the music stirred his reluctant hopes. It was good! The childish pilgrims streamed brightly forth, all youth and faith and innocent splendour, and the mothers at home wailed in vain. When the little host, broken and beaten on earth, had been taken up into heavenly glory, Dana saw with fresh eyes what he had done, and was amazed. "Did I write that?" was his solemn thought.

"It is the most beautiful thing in the world!" Lucy had tears on her eyelashes. "O my dear, the night they play it!"

Her faith moved him more than he would show. "All right, I'll try it," he assented. "It will be a stiff week."

"I will do everything I can to make it easier," she promised. And she kept her word, putting herself aside with whole-hearted devotion. If Dana did not come to a meal, the meal unobtrusively came to him: engagements were deferred or refused for him: the music room was put in order before breakfast, and no one went near it on any pretext afterward. At first the joy of defending him kept her gay, but toward the end of the week it grew to be lonely work. Dana emerged too absorbed and tired for human intercourse. On the last night, it was after midnight when the music room door opened.

"Hello!" he said surprisedly, for his wife sat curled down against the doorpost, her head resting on her knees. Beside her, on a chair, was a tray holding a thermos bottle, a cup and some sponge cakes.

"I had some hot chocolate made for you — you ate so little dinner," she explained, rising. "Will you drink it?"

"I certainly will," he assented, remotely touched and grateful, though too spent to produce the feelings with any conviction. "Why didn't you bring it in?"

"My dear! I wouldn't have interrupted you if the house had been on fire," she assured him seriously. "At least, not if I thought we could get it out."

"Good little Lucy!" He tried to rouse his jaded spirit to a proper response. "What have you been doing with yourself all this week?"

"Oh, the usual things." She filled his cup, then stood leaning against the table, looking thoughtfully down on him. "Your life is ever so much nicer than mine," she complained. "I have been thinking about it all the week."

The chocolate was reviving him; the moment had become pleasant and homelike. "How do you mean?" he asked comfortably.

"The thing you want to do most of all is the thing you must do:" she was almost scolding him for it. "When you have had a perfect orgie of happiness,

you have been fulfilling your highest duty. My days are all spent in doing what I don't want to."

"But why are they?"

"Because those are the things that must be done. I have had two committee meetings to-day, and I have visited the Diet Kitchen, and I've sat with a lame aunt — only, of course, I didn't mind that," with a note of apology; "and I have had four requests for donations; and I had to telephone to a man I didn't know and ask him to do something he didn't want to; and I've — oh, it is ordeals all the time. I do get so tired of screwing myself up, Dana! And yet it isn't half what my mother used to do every day of her life."

"Poor girl! What would you do if you could choose? Without any conscience at all?" There was a mocking intonation for "conscience," but she did not heed it.

"Paint, of course. I am not good enough to make it a real vocation, with rights of its own, but it is what I want. I would work at painting, and see pictures, and read lovely things; and go for long walks with you; and see Candy oftener; and not do anything formal ever again," she ended with impatient emphasis.

Dana finished his chocolate in thoughtful silence. "I'll tell you what," he said presently; "we'll take a vacation, and for two months you shall do exactly

as you please. We'll go to New York and sublet a studio apartment; you can always get them at this time of the year. You shall have a big duplex workroom, and you can go to classes if you like, and see all the exhibitions. And we'll be as near Candy as possible; everything just as you want it. Why not?"

For a moment her face had lit at the prospect; then the light slowly faded. "I couldn't. It would not be right," she said worriedly. She admitted that her place could be filled on the committees. "I am not really very good on them," she explained; yet the objection persisted. "We don't do things in a moment, like that," she assured him. "I might plan it for next winter; but there isn't time now."

The "we don't do it" echoed of Aunt Margaret, and struck irritatingly on Dana's strained nerves. In the freedom of Sky Farm, Lucy had exulted in doing things on a moment's notice. Again he saw the family inexorably reclaiming her.

"Why take half a year to plan a thing as simple as a b c ?" he exclaimed. "You tell me your heart's desire, and I show you how you can have a try at it. Why not simply rid your soul of scruples that don't mean a thing and take your chance?"

His force was persuasive. And he had heard about her scruples before, heard enough to disturb

her implicit faith in them, even if she could not check their rising. "You think I ought?" she hesitated.

"I do."

"W-e-ll —— " It was the slow beginning of concession, but she broke off to ask, "What would the rent be?"

"Oh, three hundred a month, perhaps."

"Three hundred dollars a month!" She could not believe that she had heard aright.

"But you get their linen and silver and furniture. It would probably be more. People always expect a good profit when they sublet."

"Three hundred a month!" It had a downward inflection, this time. "I think that is perfectly iniquitous. I supposed you were going to say fifty dollars a month."

"You couldn't get a duplex hencoop for that in New York. You would never feel it," Dana added, rising.

"It is the principle," said Lucy with tightened lips.

"Is it?" he asked, his tone carefully meaningless, though his eyes searched hers. "The principle that you couldn't spend so much for pleasure when you might be doing active good with the money?"

"I — suppose so." Some faint emphasis on that "active good" made her voice falter for an instant.

"Anyway, it is too much," she concluded firmly. "When we have this big house here."

"True: we have this big house here," he said, waiting with his hand at the light for her to leave the room. She went slowly, troubled and rebellious at the unspoken criticism in his attitude. Halfway up the stairs, she turned and waited for him.

"Do you realize that three hundred a month means an investment of seventy two thousand dollars?" she demanded. "If you knew more about the earning capacity of money, my dear boy — my grandfather taught me that when I was a little child. He used to say, 'When you spend a dollar, remember that a dollar is all that twenty dollars can earn in a year.' That taught me more!" In the fear that she might seem to be disapproving of him, she laid her hand on his shoulder. "We think nothing of five cents, and yet, after all, it takes a dollar twelve months to earn even that. If you had only learned to see it that way when you were little!"

"Thank God, I didn't!" sprang to Dana's lips, but he crushed back the words, with only an impatient movement of his shoulder to betray them.

"We don't think it right to waste money," she went on. "We look on people who inherit fortunes as the stewards of them rather than the owners."

"Fine old gag," Dana murmured, but she was too intent on her explanation to heed.

"It is our business to use them wisely and pass them on whole — larger rather than smaller. Can't you see that, dear?"

"Yes, I see that."

"Then mustn't that control our spending?"

The answer was to him childishly obvious. He had only to say, "It is right to save, it is often wrong to spend, but to love to save, to hate to spend — that is evil;" and the whole question would lie open between them. But he was tired, body and soul.

"I'm Irish, Lucy," he said. "You can't change me, I'm afraid. Now I must go to bed."

"Ah, of course — you are tired out;" she hurried on ahead of him. "I forgot for the moment. I'm sorry! Can't I do something for you?"

"Nothing, thanks." He turned to his own room and, after an instant's hesitation, shut the door. Much may be expressed in the closing of a door: that it will not open again that night, for instance; and that he who shuts it, though heartsick himself, is sorry that he must hurt the one on the other side.

The struggle between them was perilously close to the surface; but a forlorn sense that words were of no use still kept Dana silent. The difference lay in their blood and bones, far beyond the reach of argument. He reproached himself for letting this one thing bulk so darkly between them when in

every other way Lucy was so darling a person, yet, no matter in what mood he came to her, some petty aspect of their difference presently blotted out the light. It seemed to him sometimes as though every breath drawn involved the hideous factor of money.

"All that twenty dollars can earn in a year," he found himself muttering that night as he tried to go to sleep, and no wrathful turning from the phrase could get it out of his head. He awoke the next morning to find it still nagging at him: "When you spend a dollar — all that twenty dollars can earn in a year —— "

"We can't go on like this," he exclaimed, starting up; and Lucy, on the other side of the closed door, desolate and frightened, was saying the same words: "We can't go on like this." But neither foresaw the alternative.

Late that afternoon Dana carried his manuscript to the express office.

"Well, there is a thousand dollars coming to me, anyway," he told himself. He was not flushed or elated: it was a calm statement of fact. "There isn't a man in America who can beat that. One thousand dollars — all mine." It was a reviving thought.

The next day he would have set to work on a new theme if Lucy had not objected.

"You are tired to death," she declared, trying

to scold him heartily, after the manner of happy and confident wives. "It is all nonsense, to slave so. I am going to have the music room locked up until next week."

If he would only have objected aloud, scolded back, called her names, she could have lost her point with a glad heart. His, "Well — all right," was a discouraging victory.

"What should you like to do?" she asked, rising from the breakfast table for a look at the cold, gray, still morning. "Shall we go out to the Country Club and skate?"

"Have you joined?"

"No, dear, not yet. But Uncle Mortimer doesn't mind putting us up. He said to ask him whenever we wanted."

"I think we ought to join before we go again, Lucy."

"But the skating will so soon be over;" she looked unhappy. "I never have gone there for anything else. And if next year we have a warm winter —— "

"True," he assented dryly, and turned to the mail that had just been brought in. Presently an "O Lucy!" in a very different tone brought her back to him. He was reading a marked newspaper with startled, grieved eyes. "Poor old Sam Bynner," he exclaimed. "He has gone — and all his lovely

gift with him. Ah, I'm sorry. He was the best friend I ever had."

His spirit was unlocked by the touch of sorrow; he wanted to talk about his boyhood and Sam Bynner's place in it, and the rush of touched reminiscence awoke a mighty homesickness. He dwelt yearningly on his open, sunny land, on the welcome and gayety of life there, on marvellous days spent under redwoods or by the sea or on the gaunt mountain — never dreaming how he was wounding his silent listener. Every glowing word put the knife in deeper; a caged creature, given speech, would have poured out just such a tale of his past. For a newly married man to betray so poignant a homesickness was to betray the hopeless failure of his marriage. Lucy sat with her face resting on her hands, cold with a deathly chill from head to foot.

"And there's my adopted son," Dana went on. "Luis Valdez — you remember about him, Lucy? I must give him every human chance. That is all I can do for Sam Bynner."

"You didn't see him?" she managed to say, as he seemed to expect an answer.

"No. We must go out there and look him up. I have an idea that his people are pretty worthless, but I shouldn't want to take him away from them without being very sure."

She looked up, startled. "Take him away?"

"Yes, dear. I want to teach him myself; or oversee his work, anyway. I promised I would. Will you go out there with me?"

"We might go next autumn;" she spoke unwillingly, secretly swept by a hot hatred of the place that was so dear to him.

"But I can't neglect the little chap for so long, Lucy."

She was breaking open her own letters. "Can't you get some teacher there to look him up and give him lessons?"

"That isn't my idea of fulfilling a trust."

"But there must be very good teachers in San Francisco. (Do you want to go to a dance at the Holdens'?) It would be absurd and quixotic to rush right back again: we might better spend all that money on the boy himself. If he is worth it."

They were dangerously near to open hostility. Lucy read her letters with an irritating air of interest, and Dana, not guessing how he had stabbed her, felt her aloofness with a resentment that pulsed for violent expression. He curled his hands tightly into his pockets and forced himself to a reasonable tone.

"How about our big scheme for helping genius to get heard and recognized?" he began. "It seems to me that this is right in the line of it — for I have perfect faith in Sam Bynner's judgment.

You remember all the plans we made? I have never been able to get you to talk about it since we came back. Have you lost faith in it?"

The hard edge in his voice roused the pride which, though seldom visible, was a part of her inheritance. Her glance seemed almost to question his right to question her.

"I think that was all rather a wild dream," she said coolly. "It is almost impossible to help people without doing more harm than good. Especially artists."

"Why do you think that?"

"Look at last summer. That was an honest attempt to help. I was really interested and enthusiastic. I gave Candace all the money she wanted, and I went there with an open mind. But it was just as Mr. Jacks said: something for nothing is ruinous to anybody. You were the only one who didn't seem to me definitely hurt by it."

"That is a short-sighted view, Lucy. There are dozens of known cases when the right sort of help has kept genius from going under. Take Wagner —— "

"I have to believe what I have seen," she interrupted. "I shall suggest to Candy that she use the cottages as part of her school next summer." The plan was formed that instant, under the bitter need to wound. "She can pay me a small rent if

she is prospering. I know she would rather." Lucy gathered up her letters and rose. "I think I won't go out this morning. I have some committee business to see to." She crossed the room with a gentle dignity that seemed to put miles between them. At the door his voice stopped her.

"Lucy — is there any reason I should not go to California myself now and attend to this?"

Had he proposed to go back to an old love, he could not have struck more sharply. There was a moment's silence, then, "You are free to do as you please," she said with a faint shrug, and passed out.

The masculine refuge of out of doors drew Dana as imperatively as her own room called to Lucy. Half that g[illegible] morning he tramped, but he could not walk away from his bitterness. Though his anger cooled, it was still a righteous anger; what he had encountered was mean and ugly, and he did right to cry shame on it.

"Something has got to happen," he said harshly as he came back to his wife's house; but he had made no conscious plan. Habit took him to the music room, and, finding it dim and chilly, he put a match to the fire and drew a chair close to the blaze.

Lucy came slowly down from the room above and paused in the doorway, a colourless, exhausted presence that was to haunt him later, though at the

time he saw only his grievance. Her forehead drew to a faint frown as she noticed the crackling logs.

"There is a fire going to waste in the morning room," she said wearily. "Why didn't you sit there, Dana, since you are not working?"

The question was largely automatic, and came from a painful sense that she must act as usual, but it was just the tiny touch for which the great disaster hung waiting. Every protest that Dana had ever crushed down rose up now to cry judgment on her. He stood up and spoke with a deadly quietness.

"I can't stand this any longer. It is too hideous. My wife has got to live with me in my house. A man can't be subjected to — I am going back to New York. As soon as I can, I will have a home there for you. You may come to it or not, as you please. I don't care what you do with your own money, but, if you live with me at all, you shall live in my way."

She had put a fumbling hand on the back of a chair, but her wide eyes did not falter from the dark blaze in his, and, though she had grown painfully white, the line of her mouth stayed firm. "Why, Dana?" The question had no sound, but he saw it, and answered with words that had long been gathering.

"Because you are a miser. You are a beautiful and lovely woman with a streak of the meanest sin

on earth running right through the centre of you. You love money. You hoard it. Look what your income is — and what you spend. If you saved it for a purpose — any purpose — I shouldn't care. But you save it for its own sake. You hate to give. You can do it with gladness when your imagination is really waked up, but it never stays awake for the next case. You forget. I have heard you bargain with a charwoman. I've seen you jubilant over a dollar saved — for what? In God's name, for what? You have warned and reproved me until I hate the sight and sound of your money. I can't live on it another day. This is death to me, too, but it had to come. I'm going now."

He waited for her to speak, but she stood as though turned to ice until he had gone. When he had packed trunk and bag and summoned a cab, he came back to the open door. She sat where he had sat by the fire, very still, her face turned from him, but her head erect.

"Good-bye, Lucy." His voice was strained and hard and he waited there for some response, but she did not move or speak. With a shrug for his helplessness, he turned away.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Dana left the house as he might have left a battlefield. There was a sense of past horror, a dull relief at his escape, and a weariness of body and soul that wiped out all desires and regrets. He was not unhappy until an acquaintance joined him on the train: then the casual companionship awakened an obscure anguish. His nerves secretly screamed at every demand for response: his repulsion from speech was like the sick body's repulsion from good. The man got off at Providence, and again the dull sense of peace and relief took possession. He neither questioned his act nor made plans for the future. Things had happened of themselves, and would continue to happen. He arrived in New York too late to take any active measures, and went to a small hotel for the night. It was not a white night: he slept, did not consciously suffer; and yet the sight or name of that hotel, for years afterward, came like a sudden blotting out of the sun.

There was a little money due him at his music publishers. Thirty-one dollars seemed an ample cornerstone for fortune as Dana signed for it the

next morning and went on upstairs to the editorial offices. A dusty little fatherly man, peering over his spectacles, held out a stubby hand to him, smiling from the depths of a square brown beard.

"Well, Malone, how's genius?" he asked. It was their customary opening, and Dana smiled in answer, laying down a package on the desk.

"I have brought you some Irish songs. Mr. Dickson," he explained. "And I want you to buy them outright. Let me play them to you."

"Are they any good?" That also was a customary joke between them.

"You listen and see."

A piano stood in the room, and, as Dana played, silence fell on the adjoining offices. "Mary Alone" brought a group outside the open door. Mr. Dickson sat with a hand on either knee, his bushy head tipped back for closer attention, his eyes nearly hidden under dropped lids. When the songs had all been played and the audience had melted away, he took the manuscript and inattentively turned the pages. Suddenly he spoke.

"Malone, you're a fool to sell these outright. We can't give you more than -- oh, seventy, eighty dollars for all six of them. We never do. And if they're as good as they seem to me they may go on selling all your life. We will publish them, of course;

but you shouldn't let them get out of your own hands."

"I have to have the money," said Dana.

"Why, but I thought —— " Mr. Dickson checked himself, puzzled and uncertain. Dana felt his questioning look, but made no effort at explanation. The meaningful pause did not even embarrass him, for, with the inner truth so dreadful, outer scrutiny and wonder seemed then of small consequence. He recognized the awkwardness with a silent, tired, "I can't bother about that!" and waited apathetically for the moment to pass.

"Of course, acting for the firm, I ought to jump at them," Mr. Dickson concluded.

"Give me eighty dollars and lend me a piano," said Dana, rising. "I shall be perfectly satisfied. But I must have the money to-day."

"I shall have to talk it over with the Chief, but I don't think there will be any —— You are in New York now?"

"Yes; and I want work, a lot of it. Any kind."

"You do?" There was a promising inflection in Mr. Dickson's voice that brought their eyes together. "Well, there may be something. Come back this afternoon," he temporized. "I will do what I can about the check." His handshake expressed trust and sympathy, but there was no response in Dana's sombre face.

"As soon as I can, I will have a home there for you;" his own words, flung out in anger, became a simple guiding law to Dana, now that he was cold and passive and a thousand years old. "My wife has got to live with me, in my house." His course had been laid down, and he bent himself doggedly to following it. He knew the city well, and knew where to look for his first home. The pleasant apartments made of old, remodelled houses would all be taken at this time of year: his best hope lay in some new building that had been finished too late for the autumn renting. By noon he had found a bright little hole in the air, high up, streaming with south sun and still smelling faintly of fresh plaster, which he might have at a moderate rental for the balance of the year. After October, the rent would be higher; but October was a long way off. There was one large room with three tiny appendages, labelled bedroom, bath and kitchen, and the lines were pleasant to the eye, the windows well grouped. He intrepidly paid down thirty dollars to bind the bargain, and lunched off as much of the remaining dollar as his carfares had left him.

Mr. Dickson had a check for eighty dollars weighted down on his desk when Dana came in.

"We've got a piano for you," he said, but made no motion to rise and show it. His meditative silence finally ended in an abrupt, "Schmidt is

leaving us. How should you like to come in here in his place?"

Dana was startled, more reluctant than pleased. Eight hours a day over the manuscript music of others was not an appealing prospect, and the limitations of twenty-five dollars a week, the salary offered, were well known to him.

"I suppose it is the best solution," he admitted, when they had talked it over. "I'm no end grateful to you, Mr. Dickson," he added on a note of apology.

"Oh, that's all right. We are lucky to get you," was the kindly answer.

Dana left the [illegible] both troubled and relieved. He had sold all of [illegible] daylight for what, with good fortune, he might have earned with half of it; yet he was spared the immediate necessity of waiting on fortune. The angry pride that had sent him off with only a night's expenses in his pocket might have had humiliating consequences. Out of his eighty dollars he bought a cot and bedding, a table, a couple of chairs and a few kitchen utensils, and by persuasiveness succeeded in getting them delivered at once. That night he sat down in his new home and wrote two letters. He was bent over the first half the evening, yet, when it was written, it was only three lines:

DEAR LUCY: Please send letters here. I have taken a small apartment and hope soon to have it ready for you

Yours always, DANA.

The second, though longer, took only a few moments:

DEAR LUIS VALDEZ: My friend Mr. Bynner told me about you, and I promised him that I would try to help you to become a musician. Mr. Bynner was as good to me when I was a boy as he has been to you, and I owe him such a debt of gratitude that I want to pay it to you. Just now I have no money and can't do anything, but I want you to keep up your courage, work at your music all you can, and remember that I shall help you the first possible moment. I believe in you because Mr. Bynner did, and I mean to be your friend.

DANA MALONE.

Then he went to bed on his hard little cot, spreading his overcoat for extra warmth, and telling himself surprisedly that he was not especially unhappy.

"I don't seem to have any heart," he concluded.

The few days before he went to work Dana spent in close imitation of the man who sold his straw and lay on grass to buy his wife a looking-glass. Heart and mind stayed shut against Lucy, but every cent he had or could raise went toward getting the little place ready for her. His habit of prowling about old corners of the city had made him friends among antique dealers of all classes, and they welcomed him back, genially bargaining with themselves when he had told them what he wanted, and freely giving him credit. A dignified chest of drawers, a curious old mirror, a grandfatherly rocking-chair, and a table with an oval top were found for the

little bedroom, and then Dana added a white bed, and put all his remaining money into the whitest, softest blankets that the city offered. Nothing less fine would be good enough for Lucy. His own plebeian cot stayed in the main room with a piece of burlap for a cover, and he prepared most of his meals, choosing what was cheapest and easiest and swallowing it with blank indifference. The bedroom was at least habitable by Saturday night, but the big room remained stark and ridiculous, with its ornate piano and practically nothing else.

"How do poor people do it? How do they ever get whole houses furnished?" he wondered, sitting on the edge of his cot, tired and discouraged. His need angered and humiliated him. Brooding in the growing darkness, Dana suddenly understood why men commit crimes for money. But there was no crime to his hand — only a dreary possibility of music pupils. Several of his old students had shown a boyish devotion to their teacher, and might be willing to come back to him, even at the cost of evening lessons. They had known nothing of his marriage, and would not question his return; and any course would be better than sitting there, facing figures. He set out at once to hunt up the most probable. That there might be an element of absurdity in working himself to death to support an heir to the Cuyler millions did not once occur to him.

The elevators were at the front of the building, which faced the north, and was given over to studio apartments. Tenants were moving in on every floor, and, as Dana waited by the shaft, a new card on the door nearest caught his attention. He read it at first unseeingly, then with a quick shrinking back.

"Ludlam!" he muttered.

He had thought of a meeting with an old friend as the disaster most to be dreaded, but this discovery of Ludlam within a few steps of his door, Ludlam the hostile, the gossip loving, was overwhelmingly worse. Eleven flights of stairs lay between him and the street, but Dana walked down them all rather than risk a meeting.

Evidently his neighbour kept different hours. Dana came and went without an encounter until, absorbed in his new work, he almost forgot the danger. He liked his busy office, the rough and ready world of men, his plain fare and bald quarters; soft conditions had become associated in his mind with inner misery. He was not happy, but relief at having asserted his rightful self, taken manful action, was still his foremost feeling, and he gave himself no time to realize what lay in the background. Two pupils had come back to him and a third was promised; and Adrian Cuyler himself never heaped up his thousands more jealously than

Dana scraped together his scanty dollars. He had been working for several weeks before he indulged in a top gallery seat at a concert.

The music left him stirred and excited. The creator in him, held down by care and routine, had suddenly broken loose, filling him with new splendours of sound. All the creation of the years to come seemed to rise up before him, barely veiled from his senses, throwing out faint echoes and reverberations, like a flutter of beckoning white hands. He followed them about the dark streets till the fever of exaltation died down, and a prosaic forethought for the morning's work turned him toward home. Before the glory should be wholly gone, he stopped under a street lamp and set down musical notes as obliviously as if he were in his own rooms.

The curtain of sound that shut him in could not shut out the world. Presently a surprised, "Upon my word!" threw it aside. Dana, startled, shrinking as though his garments had been clutched away, found himself face to face with Ludlam. It was a fatter, more prosperous looking Ludlam, but his pointed blond beard still failed to hide the smallness of his mouth, and his coat fitted at the waist, and Dana hated him with a hatred that felt murderous.

"So genius still burns?" Ludlam had put out his hand, and Dana had to take it. "What is it — an Arclight Sonata?"

"Oh, — how are you, Ludlam?" Dana had unsmilingly put away his notebook. To Ludlam his unresponsiveness could mean only the natural and proper hauteur of the rich, and gave him a marked increase in value.

"It is good to see you again." He studied Dana with tilted head and dropped lids, as though he were a work of art, then glanced down complacently at his own opulent effect. "Things have changed a bit since we were castaways together on a desert farm," he admitted, with a small, amused smile for the secret of their scanty past. "How is Mrs. Malone?"

"Well, thank you." Dana's shortness seemed to mark him a billionaire at the least, and Ludlam's approval increased.

"It has been an interesting winter," he said confidentially. "I am coming into my own, as I suppose you have heard. I never doubted; but that is purely a matter of temperament. I have known excellent men who had no self-confidence at all. 'Ludlam is so cocksure,' they used to say. 'Is he a conceited ass, or does he know what he is about?'" He laughed delicately, taking out a cigarette case. "Well, we don't hear that question any longer. Will you smoke?"

"Thanks, no."

"Wise man. I am smoking myself to death,

they tell me." He lit a cigarette with the long-armed, fluent gestures that Dana had always resented. "I've got a little place just round the corner here, in the Dartmoor Studios; it's not bad. Won't you come up?"

"I can't to-night, thanks." Dana was backing restlessly, but the suave voice still held him.

"Ah, to be sure: these married men! I wish you would bring Mrs. Malone in some afternoon. I should like to show her one or two things. Are you in town for long?"

The desire to escape had become an anguish. Heedless of consequences, Dana burst through the delicate web of courtesy that had been cast over him.

"I can't say. Well, I must be off. Good-night," he jerked out, his hands thrust defiantly into his pockets, and strode away as though bound for the other end of town. Ten cooling blocks lay between him and the encounter before he realized the awkward moment he had prepared for himself, when he and Ludlam should meet in their own halls.

"I'll move, then," he said irritably as he turned and came slowly back. "No, by jinks, I won't;" with rising rage. "I'll look him in the eye and I won't give a damn!" And he entered the building with a savage desire that the encounter might take place then, feeling that his part in it would be a relief in the unmitigated, hateful dreariness of existence.

CHAPTER NINE

People carried trouble — any one's trouble — to Candace Ware. Not that she met it with any marked signs of compassion. She was baldly unsentimental, and she had no capacity whatever for righteous rage: the wrongdoer's side was as comprehensible as the victim's to her humorous tolerance. Once Dana, in a white heat over an act of cruelty to a dog, had turned on her and demanded a responsive anger.

"Well, I kicked a parrot once myself," she had objected in her easy drawl, "and I've never been sorry."

His wrath had gone down in laughter, and "I kicked a parrot," had lived like a proverb. But, if she would not condemn, she would take endless trouble for any one in "hard luck"; and, if she was not soft-hearted after the traditional fashion, she was at least genial, and her sleepy little brown eyes curled up at the corners in a mellow smile. She was never seen to take up a book. In the rare moments when she was not occupied, she lay back in a deep chair, as motionless in her content as a lizard in the sun.

Such a moment of Sunday afternoon peace was broken in on by the doorbell and the sound of a bustling entrance.

"Hello, Palmer," she said placidly, without turning her head.

Palmer Jacks had no attention to spare for greetings. He came in radiating news.

"What's all this about the Dana Malones?" he began, drawing a chair to the hearth and seating himself with head tilted for closer attention, his handsome, ruddy face all a concentrated question. Candace had straightened up.

"The Dana Malones?" she repeated. "I haven't heard from them in ages," she added.

"Then you don't know that he is living here, by himself?"

"No!"

Palmer nodded grave affirmation. He was concerned and sorry, but he was undeniably enjoying himself. "I just heard about it from Ludlam," he explained. "It's a queer business. Malone is living in the same building, though Ludlam has only just found it out. And you didn't know it?"

"Not a word of it. You are sure?"

Palmer's eyebrows and shoulders admitted the fallibility of all evidence. "I wouldn't stake my life on Ludlam's word; but I don't see why he should invent this particular tale. Now if he had told me

that a Russian princess had shot herself on his account — gad, wouldn't he enjoy that? — or that a dealer had given him fifteen thousand dollars for a picture, I might have my private doubts. But this sounds pretty straight."

Candace was frowning at him. "Tell me what you know," she commanded.

"Well, Ludlam met him first on the street, night before last, and asked him to his rooms; but Malone wouldn't come. Went off as though he lived at the other end of town. The next morning the two came face to face at the elevator. Ludlam naturally supposed that Malone was looking him up, and greeted him as a man and a brother — or, rather, as a man and a millionaire. You know Luddy! Whereupon Malone scowled at him and said, 'I am not looking for you. I live here, on this floor.' Then he marched into the elevator, and Ludlam was too surprised to follow him. But he asked a few questions — he wasn't too surprised for that — and found out that Malone has been there nearly a month, evidently alone, and downtown working every day. Now what do you make of it?"

Candace nodded, as at something she might have known. "Hard luck," she admitted. There was understanding in her voice, and he pounced on it.

"What has happened? Nice young fellow like that — what has he done?"

"He hasn't done anything. It's geography, Palmer. 'As far as the East is from the West.' I ought to have kept an eye on them. I knew they'd hurt each other, but I didn't suppose it would come to this. Did Ludlam say anything more?"

"Well, he pointed out his own great delicacy in not following up the matter. That is, he hasn't knocked on Malone's door and asked him why he left his wife. It's a great thing to have these refined instincts, Candy."

"No, it isn't. I intend to knock on Dana's door and ask him that very question." Candace half rose, then deferred action for the moment. "It must have been pretty bad!"

"You know something you're not telling me," he complained.

"Only their two characters."

Palmer meditated on the two characters, his head cocked like a wise bird's. "She was a mighty sweet little girl," he finally admitted; "but I'm afraid that marrying her would be rather like living with a museum piece. Most of us would prefer to enjoy the museum piece in the museum."

"Oh, Lucy is human enough."

"Um — perhaps. But you know, Candy, as long as she lived, she'd never really enjoy a vulgar joke!"

Candace smiled comprehendingly at the indict-

ment. "They don't either of them know how to laugh at the saving moment. And now they have to learn. Well, it's time, I suppose. I'll go round there and see what I can do."

Palmer's eyes twinkled with a suppressed gibe. "Why haven't you ever married, Candy?" he asked.

"Why, I have," was the placid answer.

He could only stare and stutter. "You — you — *have?*"

"Yes — once."

"Gad! once is generally enough!" He drew a long breath and unconsciously wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. "Why haven't you ever told me?"

Candace frankly pondered. "I don't know; I suppose I had sort of forgotten about it. I was only seventeen, and it didn't — last. He wasn't a bad sort, either," she added musingly. "I don't see that he could help — but my family hauled me out of it. You see, we had eloped." She rose, with purpose this time. "I'll get on my things," she said.

When she came back, Palmer was still too stupefied for speech. He went down to the street beside her in silence, and put her on her car with a dazed handclasp.

"I won't speak of it to a soul," he said, and Candace, in the car, laughed to herself, realizing that

friendship could scarcely have wrung from him a more oppressive vow.

Dana went through his week days well enough, but Sundays were increasingly difficult. He could crowd the morning with work; but the afternoon always brought an hour when his tired brain and body refused to help him any longer, and despair was very close. He still kept Lucy sternly shut out; but there came a Sunday when he went into her closed room and sat down in the grandfatherly rocker, burying his face in her bed. Great wheels seemed to roll slowly over him, crushing out hope and strength and rebellion. A longing to be very little and to have some one take him up on her lap filled his eyes with tears. He was, after all, only an ignorant little boy, very lost and frightened. This matter of being a grown man was all a bluff.

"I do need help," he said desolately.

Help knocked at his outer door, but Dana, not recognizing the signal, muttered imprecations, and carefully closed the little room before he answered. Face to face with Candace, he was once more the grown man, cool and defensive.

"Hello, Candy!" He spoke with cheerful surprise. "Come in. Glad to see you."

Candace was not to be held at arm's length. "I am not at all glad to see you," she returned. After

a quick glance about the bare room, her eyes came back to his face, and discovered its secret haggardness, the look that was both tragic and boyish under its smiling defence. She laid a comradely hand on his arm. "Couldn't it have been helped?" she asked.

He moved away from the hand, but dropped the cheerfulness. "I'm afraid not. Here's a chair. Or you can sit on my bed, if you prefer. They're equally hard."

She took the couch and deliberately drew off her gloves. "Nice room," she said. "I have more furniture than I can use. I'll send you over one or two things. Have you a kitchen?"

"Oh, yes." He showed her the kitchen, but made no motion to open the door of the bedroom. They talked at hazard about light housekeeping and furniture, then Candace let a silence preface a fresh attack. Dana did not wait for it.

"A man has to earn his own living, Candy," he said dryly. "It's a law of nature. I learned it fairly hard, but — I learned it."

"Does he — at any cost?"

"Yes. The cost of not earning it is always greater. I have done nothing hurriedly, or that I could escape." He turned away with a nervous jerk, hooking his elbow over the back of his chair. "I hope to have Lucy here some day," he explained.

Candace bent toward him, her elbows digging into her knees, a smile of human understanding lighting the handy brown face between her fists. "See here, Dana; couldn't you have laughed?"

"Laughed!"

"U'm h'm. I did. All through Europe."

"I don't know what you mean." He spoke exasperatedly, but she continued to smile on him from between her fists.

"Well, I'll tell you. Haven't you ever noticed how, when it is an ordinarily hot day, we grumble at it; but when the heat becomes abnormal, when the thermometer goes up and up and the ambulances are clanging all day long and people dropping in the streets — a joke element comes into it? Nobody grumbles then: they laugh as they meet. It is so bad, it's funny. There's a wild sort of good humour bred by the very extremity of it. You've seen that? Well, it's the same way with other things. For instance, when a person has eight or nine thousand a year and worries about carfares, that may be necessary or it may be dead mean; but in either case it's annoying. But when a person with eighty or ninety thousand a year worries over a carfare, it is just funny. It is nature gone mad. It's a hundred and two in the shade. You've got to laugh."

Dana had listened with frowning intentness. "I think you're talking rot," he decided.

"No, I'm not. Let me show you. Just as an instance, one day in Paris we bought a dozen peaches out of our common-expenses fund, Lucy and I; and then Lucy wasn't well and didn't eat any of them. Presently I discovered that it worried her — that she had paid half. So I put an extra franc into the fund, and I secretly yelled. For she couldn't help it, poor lamb: it was just Grandpa Cuyler. If he had poked his head up over his monument, it couldn't have been clearer — or funnier."

Dana shivered. "No, I couldn't have laughed," he muttered, a look of shame on his face.

"Not if the extra franc were of any earthly use to her!"

"Not anyway."

"Well, perhaps not if she were like that all through," Candace conceded. "But that's just it: she is so ridiculously generous about everything else. Did you ever know any one who would give her time as Lucy does? And her pity?"

She had at last let a ray of light into his darkness. Lucy sitting for hours with a dull old lady in a furnace-heated room, jealously sealed against fresh air — Lucy toiling over committee work — Lucy caught on the street with a heavy, dirty baby in her arms, that a poor woman's load might be lightened — a hundred pictures of a loving and giving Lucy rose up before his startled sight.

"Anybody can give money. That is easy," Candace added. "But to give everything else, without stint, and then balk at that one little thing can't you see the joke?"

He threw out despairing arms. "Oh, perhaps, perhaps. But the money is there, all the time, in everything. You can't get away from it. You can't use it, and you can't avoid it. Every department of life is smeared all over with it. It can hurt you in four hundred places in a single day. You might get along without, for yourself; but when it comes to deciding that you can't help other people — " He was telling more than he meant to, and pulled himself up. Candace answered only the last sentence.

"Every one who gives much has to think that now and then," she said reasonably. "There is something in it. You know, Dana, with unlimited money, a person like you can do no end of harm in this cranky world."

He did not like that. "I am not quite a fool!"

"No," she admitted; "and, of course, having it would modify you. Nobody is ever quite so lavish as the man who hasn't a cent. Besides, one gets so many blows, trying to help, they tame that wild native generosity. Half the things one attempts seem to turn out worse than wasted effort."

"Do you really believe that?"

"My dear boy, I know it. I'll tell you a case, a man I discovered with a wonderful gift for illustration. He had been too poor to study enough, so I got people interested, and we managed two years at the League for him, and private lessons, and then a room and board till he should get on his feet, and letters to art editors, and dear knows what. Sounds legitimate, doesn't it? Wouldn't you have contributed? Well. After several months, I looked him up, expecting to find him well under way. Do you know what he was doing? Sitting down on his board and lodging, writing a sonnet cycle, which he planned to illustrate later. He had done absolutely nothing else."

Dana managed a smile. "How were the sonnets?"

"Not much worse than commonplace. If he could have given ten years to literary composition, he might have turned out — printable. Perhaps. Oh, I understood, of course. He had been praised till he thought he could do anything; and his literary impulse felt as real to him as the other. But I had to say a few direct words, and there was a frightful case of hurt feelings. We had completely ruined him. He proudly withdrew from the board and lodging, and I don't know what he is doing now — learning a little sense, I hope. He hasn't emerged as an illustrator. But that is what you have to expect,

half the time: as much harm as good. Only, of course, that doesn't let you off from trying. And from wanting to try. I'm so used to it now, it doesn't even discourage me." She rose, pulling on her gloves. "It's a funny world, Dana. Better learn to laugh. It helps."

He shook his head. "You don't understand."

"Oh, don't I?" Her brown eyes twinkled. "I know what happened as well as if I had been there: Lucy with her worried Grandpa look, Dana proud and sensitive and thinking it right to be proud and sensitive, poor fool of a man! Now come and have supper with me and tell me what you are doing."

He was too forlorn to resist, so she bore him off, and the homelike meal, the easy companionship, brought a dim comfort. But they weakened his defences. The numbness that had made the days possible was threatened. He stayed as late as he dared in dread of what solitude might bring, then tramped himself into apathy before he turned home.

Spring was in the air as he walked uptown late the next afternoon. The inexorable opening was at hand. City squares hinted it in their swelling green, city birds chirped it, city eyes glanced it into his moody face. The joy of the pavements was as dead for Dana as all other joy, but he caught the day's suspense the sense of coming riches, and grew

alert for whom or what he might pass. A figure half seen in the crowd, a gently rounded girl who lifted sudden blue eyes, sent a shock through all his being and roused an insane hope. He could angrily assert that there was no one on earth he wanted to see; but he could not put back the coming season.

An art dealer's window displayed a single picture, set forth with an air of consequence. Dana, seeing others pause, threw it a careless glance; and so brought down upon himself the waiting torrent of spring. The picture showed a single rounded wave of land heaving up into a sky of noble breadth. It was the sky that dominated, a vast, overarching splendour of sky beneath which the little world of farm and wood was only a streaming summer greenness and a blur of woodland shadow; but its outlines were unmistakable. "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God" was written on the card beneath. As Ludlam had explained, "They like a title." His name was not needed to set Dana's feet on the hills of Sky Farm. He stood with the June wind on his face and the shimmer of June romance in his eyes, the bleak present forgotten. When others began to glance at him and to crowd about the picture, he strode on; but he was no longer alone. He would never be alone again, so long as he walked this earth. The love that had come to him under that great sky was for life, and Lucy would be

there against his arm until the arm withered. His defences were down.

A premonition of coming pain, pain too horrible to be borne, drove him savagely on. He tried to remember only the girl of Sky Farm, but, before he could turn from it, he saw Lucy's face as he had last seen it, wide-eyed, stricken, yet, some way, brave: the lips had kept their line, the throat had not bent.

"Don't!" he breathed. He had feared that an hour must come when he realized his own hurt, but he had not reckoned with the hour that should show him how he had hurt his wife. Lucy warm and colourful, wide open to love and merriment — and then this frozen woman, with her stabbed look and her proud stillness.

"It couldn't be helped," he flung out. "I did my best. It had to be." But flinging hard facts at it could not drive away the vision.

Till now his own apathy had been a surprise to Dana, sometimes a reproach; a dull, bleak, miserable boredom did not seem enough to pay for the wreck of his married life, and the absence of acute anguish had suggested to him more than once that, after all, he had very little heart. To-night he learned better. His dazed heart awoke to its depths and proved itself as great in pain as it had been in joy. There was no suffering due that he had not

paid in full before the dawn touched his haggard face.

By breakfast time he was at Candace's door.

"What can I do?" he asked. He was as unselfconscious as a child in his helplessness and his despair. "Candy, tell me what to do." She laid her friendly hand on his arm, and he clung to it.

"Go to Boston," she counselled.

"But — how can I? I can't ask her to come yet, even if she would. And I can't go back to — what was. Never! Not for anything on earth. So what can I say to her?"

"Say that. Or don't say anything. Just go to her. You'll find a way when you have — seen each other." She smiled faintly into the gaunt tragedy of his face. "Come and have some coffee, and then I'll show you the things I am sending over to you," she added.

If Dana had not been so drowned in trouble, he would have wondered how Candace could spare so many furnishings. She had them together in a corner of the studio, ready for the express — several delightful chairs, an old carved table, a rug or two, a brass lamp, a pile of cushions.

"I was getting too crowded here," she explained casually. "You will have almost enough to begin on, now."

He looked at them vaguely, yet with a desolate

gratitude. "You're so good to me," he muttered. "If I only knew what to do!"

"Go and ask Lucy," was her parting advice.

The words rang in his ears all day. He could reason down the advice, point out the hopelessness of going to a deeply offended woman with nothing tangible to offer, not even a whole-hearted, "I was wrong;" yet the idea presented itself over and over with undiscouraged freshness. "Go and ask Lucy." Mr. Dickson heard him murmur the words over his work, and broke out with affectionate testiness.

"Malone, you look like a ghost. What are you saying there? What on earth is the matter?"

Dana stared at him as from another planet; then laid down his pen and rose.

"I'm afraid I must go to Boston," he said. "If I take the five o'clock, I can have two or three hours there and be back in the morning."

"Don't do that: stay all night. If you are here Wednesday morning, that will do."

Dana thanked him and hurried uptown to his rooms. There was relief in taking action; and there was a sudden, unlooked for, mighty joy in going to Lucy. For the first time, he entered his building with the step and bearing of a young man.

A dark bundle lay against his door. Suspecting an offering from Candace, Dana went alertly toward it, then stopped with an astonished, "Hello!" For

the handle proved to be a very dirty, ragged boy, asleep with his face on his arm. At Dana's exclamation, he lifted his head, and the eyes of old Spain, mournfully brown, set in blue-white and rimmed with dense black fringe, looked drowsily up from a dark face that seemed to have been rubbed in coal. As he scrambled to his feet, his age, by his height, might have been eight or nine, but there were probably several more years concealed about his meagre little person. The face had a pinched maturity. He said nothing, but stared up into Dana's face with a tense expectancy somewhat trying to a man in a hurry. Dana unlocked the door.

"Are you waiting for me — Dana Malone?" he asked. "I haven't much time. Come in and tell me what you want."

The boy stood just within the door, but he still did not seem able to speak. If Dana had not been more interested in getting down his bag, he would have seen that the little figure shook in its scarecrow clothes, and that the jaw was clenched to control its trembling. The bag had proved full of odds and ends, and Dana was tumbling them out. "What is your name?" he added without looking up. A faint whisper came from over by the door. "Oh, speak up like a man," he threw out good-humouredly. "Do I know you?"

The boy tugged at an envelope that was wedged in a pocket. When he had it out, he came slowly forward, and Dana, glancing up, saw that it was not timidity that hampered him. The expectant eyes showed even the spark of a smile.

"I'm Luis," he whispered, as one who tells a glad secret. Then he melted down on the floor as if his little spine had been withdrawn. The envelope fell beside him, face up, and Dana read in his own handwriting the name of Luis Valdez. For the moment he was too astonished to move.

"For the Lord's sake!" he muttered; and then, "Well, what do you think of that!"

There was no time to confront the problem. When a few drops of spirits had revived the boy, Dana lifted him to the couch, gave him a cup of water, and beat up raw eggs in milk with frowning haste.

"Pretty hungry?" he asked. Luis's eyes were fixed on the bowl with a devouring intentness that needed no words. Dana fed him slow spoonfuls, and, in spite of his dismay, the joy of rescue began to warm his eyes and voice as strength visibly came back to his tattered guest. When he had set down the bowl, he passed an investigating hand along the thin arms and legs.

"Well, did you walk from California?"

"Oh, no." Luis smiled over the joke. "Only

from — what was it? The big animal — Buffalo. And I got lots of rides."

"Only from Buffalo," Dana repeated. "And you did all that to find me?"

"You will make me a musician," said Luis confidently. "You will be good to me like Mr. Bynner was to you."

"Oh, I see." Dana hesitated, then firmly went on: "But, you know, Luis, I haven't any money now. I wrote you that."

"Oh, I will get you some," Luis reassured him. "I can earn all I want. Have you got an old flute or anything?"

"A flute?"

"I will play it on the street, so." Luis curled his hands to the left of his grimy face, and looked up over the imaginary instrument with eyes somournful, so appealing, so rich in old-world mystery, that Dana could almost hear some little wailing air. Then he dropped the instrument and winked without shame. "That gets 'em," he explained.

"My Lord!" murmured Dana, and fell into appalled silence. Luis reached out for the bowl and finished its contents without ceremony.

"Got any more?" he asked.

Dana roused himself with a sigh. A city clock had just struck five. "By and by," he said. "Tell me, did you earn the money to get to Buffalo?"

A startling change came over the pinched face, so cheerfully impudent the moment before. Its flash into anger was like the drawing of a knife.

"It was mine," he declared shrilly, rising up in a fury of self-defence. "Mine! Father Murphy said so. Mr. Bynner left it to me, 'my piano to my little friend Luis Valdez' — like that, in writing. It was mine!"

Dana put a quieting hand on his shoulder, pushing him gently down again. "Who took it away from you?"

"My father and mother." Luis spat like an angry cat. "Pigs! I told them, 'I will kill you if you sell it!' And they sold it that very day. Pigs! They hid the money under the stove. I was three nights finding it. They caught me looking, but they were so drunk they only laughed. Pigs! Pigs!" His passion of hate was distressing. Dana tried to divert him from it.

"How could you get a ticket, a little chap like you? They wouldn't sell it to you, would they?"

Luis dropped back at once into his normal complacency. "Oh, I always get along. I can do anything: it is quite re-markable. I told a man a story about being an orphan and my uncle sending for me, so he bought the ticket, and his wife gave me things to eat out of her basket; it was fine till we got to Chicago. That was all the far they went."

"But that was a lie," said Dana.

"Oh, yes. I can tell a better lie than any boy in my school;" and Luis smiled in simple pride. "Have you got a piece of bread?" Dana rose in silence and shut the kitchen door between himself and his acquisition. He felt an exhausted need of solitude.

He was not left very long to confront his problem. Luis unceremoniously followed.

"Did you find that piece of bread?" he demanded, and seemed so restored that Dana set out a supper for him. He wanted to resent the intruder, whose coming had so intolerably upset his plans, but for the life of him he could not. The little fellow's melancholy, old-world eyes, his perfect assurance, and his dangling rags combined to give him an absurd charm. Dana found himself on the verge of a laugh as he cut the desired piece of bread.

"Perhaps you would like to wash before you eat," he suggested.

"No," was the positive answer. "But I will wash afterward," Luis conceded, after a mouthful pause. "I take a bath at Father Murphy's every Saturday; that is how I pay him for letting me practise on his piano. My father and mother do not wash at all. They are pigs."

Dana hastened to change the subject. "Father Murphy has been good to you," he said.

"Oh, yes, Father Murphy and Mr. Bynner. They were my two friends. They learned me my English; my father and mother are so ignorant, they talk nothing but Spanish. That is why I speak so good. Not like other boys."

"And does Father Murphy know where you are?"

Luis shook his head, being beyond speech at the moment. "You will write him a letter," he explained when he could. "You tell him that when I am a great musician, I will go back to see him; but if my father and mother come after me, I will kill them with a knife." He looked quite capable of trying it, with the bread knife caught up in his fist and the sudden glint in his brown eyes. Dana rose from the corner of the table with a distracted gesture.

"What in thunder am I going to do with you?" he exclaimed.

The doorbell roused a fervent hope of Candace; but it was her furniture to which he opened. He was touched when he realized how much she had sent. There were even books and a sketch or two. The room looked pleasantly inhabited when he and Luis had everything in place. The glow of the work and of the hope that lay back of it had cleared Dana's face of its habitual shadow.

"And now, young man, you for the bathtub," he said genially, and went to turn on the water.

When he came back, Luis was standing in the doorway of the little room. "Here, come out of there!" Dana spoke so sharply that the boy started. "You mustn't go in there," he added more gently, closing the door. "That is my wife's room."

Luis kicked off his clothes with undampened cheerfulness. "Will she sleep there to-night?" he asked.

"No, not to-night."

"When?"

"I can't say. Run along now and see that you get clean."

Luis, emerging several shades lighter, found a bed made up of cushions and a rug, and a clean garment for him to sleep in. He settled himself with wriggles of satisfaction, and his mysterious eyes, already heavy with sleep, fixed themselves on his host with an intensity that presently made Dana pause by the improvised bed.

"Well?" he asked. Luis put up two fairly clean hands and curled them tightly about his fingers.

"I'll earn money for you," he said earnestly, "and run your errands, and I can cook for you; I can do anything. And when I am bad, you can lick me."

Dana gave the hands a comradely pressure. "All right, old boy," he said gravely. And so the compact of lasting affection was signed and sealed between them.

After Luis was asleep, Dana sat for a long time over a letter to Father Murphy.

"I am not well placed for taking the responsibility," he wrote, "but he is here, and I want to carry out my promise to Mr. Bynner. I will" — he paused, staring darkly into the future, then wrote on — "legally adopt the boy, if you think it best, and can get his parents' consent. And I will see that he grows up in the church that has been so good to him. I shall probably not keep him in my home — there are others to be consulted. But I will be responsible for him. I realize the seriousness of what I am undertaking — and the difficulties, just now, are especially great; but it is the only way of paying the greatest debt of my life. And I like the little chap."

It was not a letter to mail on first impulse. Dana put it by and sent a telegram to Father Murphy, saying that the boy was safe. He longed to go to Candace, but he had run to her with his troubles once that day, and pride withheld him. He did go to the mother of one of his pupils, a generous woman with a family of boys, who laughed uproariously over his dilemma, and gave him enough clothes to set up Luis in overwhelming respectability. Being a good Catholic, she also gave him a note to a kindly priest in his neighbourhood. So Dana went on to Father Grant, and made him also chuckle over the tale of Luis. He could laugh at it himself now. As Candy had said, it was a funny world.

"Bring the boy round to me;" Father Grant was shaking Dana's hand with shrewd liking. "We

must clap him into school — that's the first thing. Malone — Malone," he added ruminatingly. "By the sound of that name, you should be one of us." He seemed so secure, so content, so unharassed by life, this hardy little man, that Dana's heart went out to him.

"I wish I were," he said; then, seeing a spark of interest in the other's eyes, he added a smiling, "But my wife is a Boston Unitarian, Father. So it wouldn't do."

"Ah — so there's a wife?"

Dana flushed, and for an instant his trouble looked out of his sombre eyes. "She is not with me just at present," he said, turning away.

"If she were a good Catholic she would be," said the Father with a disciplinary nod.

There was no question of going to Boston now. Dana devoted the morning to Luis's affairs, testing his musical gift, which was remarkable, and taking him, a little subdued by his whole and neat clothes, to see his new spiritual director. In the afternoon he went back to his office, mailing his letter to Father Murphy on the way.

"It is only a matter of earning a little more," he asserted with a brave front.

Luis, left to himself, had none of the well brought up child's helplessness. When he had practised as long as his restless body would permit, he went out

into the streets and investigated the neighbourhood with the thoroughness of a detective or a fox terrier. He discovered the Park, found a nearly whole cigarette and smoked it, murmured outrageous Spanish epithets at an unconscious policeman, lured a cat from an area wall with ardent blandishments and caressed it with half shut eyes of ecstasy, then frightened it almost into hysterics by a sudden leap and yell; and paused before every sheet of glass he could find to study his well-clad person. This pleased him so much that he begged a broken carnation from a flower stand and strutted home with a decorated buttonhole, triumphal music streaming through his curiously aged little soul.

A studio door by the elevator was open, and Luis paused to look in. Within, two men stood before a large canvas, one with a hat in his hand, in the attitude of departure. The other threw him a quick, irritable glance.

"I don't want any models," he said over his shoulder.

"I haven't got any, if you did," said Luis composedly. The larger man turned at that, showing a ruddy, handsome face swept by a big gray moustache, and eyes twinkling with laughter.

"Just calling?" he asked.

"Well, I thought I'd look in," Luis explained, turning away with a bored air.

"Interested in art, perhaps?"

"I wouldn't encourage him, Jacks," Ludlam threw in.

"I am a musician;" Luis answered exclusively to Jacks. "I have re-markable talent. They all say that."

"Delighted to hear it," said Jacks. "Are you living in these parts?"

"I live on this floor, at the back."

Ludlam turned at that. "Who are you, anyway?" he asked.

"Mr. Malone's Luis."

The two men glanced surprise at each other. "I didn't know he had a Luis," Jacks said jokingly.

"Oh, yes. I have come from California to live with him and become a great musician." Luis strolled away with Castilian dignity. "I will play for you some time," he threw back over his shoulder to Palmer; "but not to him."

Palmer had lost his air of imminent departure. "That's a queer business," he exclaimed. "Though it is some pupil, of course," he added.

"No doubt," said Ludlam, a smile that was very small half hidden in his blond beard. "It fits in curiously, though, with what one heard about the Malones' wedding trip."

"You mean that they cut it short?"

"I mean that something happened to make them

leave San Francisco a few hours after they got there."

"Everybody knows everything," Palmer muttered with a short sigh. "Who told you?"

Ludlam forbore to say that it was Jacks himself. "Oh, one hears," he explained.

Palmer straightened up bluffly, clapping on his hat. "Miss Ware will know all about it. I will just drop in there . . . " He paused, shaking his head. "Every Californian has a past," he observed humorously. "You're always stumbling on it unexpectedly. They don't mind it. Gad — when a New England woman has a history, it's written all over her; but it shakes off a Westerner like water off a duck." He started to go, then paused in the doorway. "How long have you known Miss Ware?"

"Oh, only a few years. Never well."

Palmer visibly wrestled with temptation, and conquered. "Well, she's a mighty fine woman," he said, with a sigh for what he might not reveal. "I'll ask her about 'Mr. Malone's Luis.'"

"I am just running down to Boston myself. I may hear something there," Ludlam said, a disagreeable satisfaction in his sidelong glance.

CHAPTER TEN

THE front door had closed and Dana had gone, but Lucy still sat stiffly erect by the blaze that had wrought so much havoc. In all her gentle life, she had never before been absolutely angry, and her anger was to her a terrible and sickening thing that hardened her soul to granite, but set her body trembling and shaking as though dissolution were at hand. She gave no heed then to the charge Dana had made — merely flung it from her as she might have flung off a noisome insect: the bitter failure of his love was all that she could see.

"He is not worth bothering about," she said with a gesture of dismissal; but still the humiliating physical weakness held her.

Presently a maid's entrance with letters acted like a call to arms, steadying her nerves and giving her back her composure. She announced, with a coolness that startled herself, that Mr. Malone had been called to New York; and so took up again the interrupted business of living. She had to make the announcement many times in the weeks that

followed; and never before had she been so brave with the family, so bold with circumstances.

"Lucy is developing quite a manner," Aunt Margaret conceded. "Marriage is bringing her out." Mrs. Mortimer Cuyler was "at home," and Lucy was pouring tea for her, and talking merrily from behind the urn.

"Yes, she really has — it is," Cousin Susie agreed. The family were touchingly accordant when Aunt Margaret praised. "And how pretty she looks!"

"Happiness is a great beautifier," was the bland answer. Being in a benignant mood, Aunt Margaret presently repeated this to Lucy: "Susie and I have just agreed, my dear, that happiness is a great beautifier." Lucy's eyes, clear and smiling, met hers without flinching.

"Ah, I wish you would let me give you another cup of tea," she returned.

She had quite a success that afternoon, and, in a hard, new fashion, she enjoyed it. Her spirit, sternly forbidden sorrow, turned passionately to excitement. The young men of the family hovered about her, visibly surprised. Mortimer, Jr., insisted on having the chair beside her whenever it was vacant.

"Why don't you like us?" he demanded, when the calls on her had slackened. At her protest, he explained with boyish bluntness that she always went with "the poky side of the family."

"But I never supposed that the gay side would like me," she said, so naïvely that he shouted.

"I used to be deathly afraid of you," he confided. "I'm not a bit now. Suppose we have a tearing old flirtation while Dana is away?"

"Suppose we do," said Lucy. "Only you will have to show me how. I haven't the least idea."

"Oh, I will!" he promised. Then an older relative displaced him, bringing up some one who had begged an introduction. Others followed. If they were discovering her, she was also discovering them. She had not dreamed that she could be so at home with this "gay side" of her family. What nice people they were! And she had only to show herself willing, to turn them all into friends.

"I shall need friends," she admitted, then shivered away from what lay back of the thought. She saw the rooms emptying with a regret that was half terror.

Mrs. Mortimer Cuyler, handsome and resplendent, paused amusedly to lay a finger on her burning cheek.

"Why, Lucy, you are coming out," she said. "I had no idea you were such a flirt."

"Don't let them go, Aunt Frances," Lucy begged. "Make Laura sing."

Others, overhearing, took up the request, and the daughter of the house was presently led to the

piano. Her contralto voice swept richly through the rooms, silencing the few scattered groups that remained. The demand for an encore was insistent, and Mrs. Cuyler, with a smiling glance at Lucy, murmured a request.

"I am not sure I know it," Laura objected; "I'll try, though. It is an Irish song of Cousin Dana's," she added to those about her. "I have seen it only in manuscript."

She struck a chord, and Lucy, standing in the doorway, felt the ground shake and open under her feet. She glanced about for a way of escape; but some one was placing a chair for her, and there was no clear way out. So she sat down, bravely erect, her hands folded together on her knee.

> "Ah, Mother of Christ, who trod this path —
> You were Mary, too, like me —"

The rich voice was thinned to evoke wild images — ghosts and dreams and a loneness that rose to a haunting cry.

"It is fortunate that I am too angry to have any heart;" Lucy spoke as quietly to her soul as she might have to a neighbour. "Otherwise, this song would have broken it. I am glad that I don't feel things any longer. It is a great gain. I never

supposed that I could sit through this and not care in the least. I am very proud of myself."

"You were Mary Alone like me!"

crooned the longing voice.

"I'd better keep on talking to myself; it is safer," went on the silent monologue over by the door. "I am a coward in many ways, but a good soldier under fire. I don't go to pieces. That isn't boasting — it is merely reminding myself. It takes a good soldier to sit like this where every one can look, and let herself be torn to bits without giving a sign. And I am not really minding it; I don't think she sings it very well. *Oh, if she would only stop!* Lucy, Lucy! I was called a flirt to-day. Isn't that too funny? I didn't know it was flirting till Aunt Frances said so, but it was very amusing. I must do it again. She is mixing up the words: it is the 'lone white mist' that is to her knee. Still, I never thought much about the words — the music was what I cared about. That was a hundred years ago, before I had died and the worms had eaten me. O God, if she would only stop! I tell you, I don't care. He has gone out of my life. That part of it is done. I can do without love. I am going to be big and wise and calm: I must expect to be hurt like this very often, and sitting here is splendid training.

I am glad to prove that I can do it. I wouldn't cry if it cost me my - - oh, will it never end? I am not really in pain — I only think I am. My heart is nothing but a little cold piece of granite, with a crack in it. It is good to be done with the whole thing. I must plan how I shall fill my days. If I had pencil and paper, it would be easier. Dana always planned everything on the backs of envelopes. Lucy, Lucy, don't! I must keep up. If I could only die of it. I am so ill. Oh, the walls — look — here they come! If I am killed, I can cry all I want to. Dana, love, I tried not to break down — I did try —— "

As the song came to an end, a startled movement about the doorway checked the applause. Mrs. Dana Malone had fainted. She was quickly lifted into the next room, and in a few moments Mrs. Cuyler came out to reassure the guests. It was nothing: Lucy had been overexcited, and was all right now, though her nerves were upset. There was a little invisible smiling among the older women, and eyebrows were imperceptibly lifted. These faintings of young married women were not usually fatal, they implied. Then Aunt Frances went back to Lucy, who lay with her face to the wall, and sobbed and sobbed.

"It's nothing; I can't help it," she stammered. "Oh, please let me, just this once!"

Aunt Frances sent away the others and let her have it out, sitting beside her in graceful silence. She would have kept her all night, but Lucy, white and spent, insisted on going home. Her aunt kissed her lightly on both cheeks.

"We don't see half enough of each other in this great family," she said. "I am coming in to have a little visit with you in the morning." Lucy pressed gratefully against her, but said nothing.

To give herself up to pain, to forget pride and admit that she was hurt even unto death, was a wild relief, after those frozen days and nights. Lucy was too fevered and exhausted to give thought to what had wrecked their happiness: she could only cry out blindly for what was lost, and at last conjure up a presence that took her into comforting arms and let her fall asleep with her cheek on a dream shoulder.

In the morning she felt curiously blank and ill. The anguish of the night before seemed as unreal as a nightmare. The only realities were her bodily misery, and the fact that Aunt Frances was coming to find out what was the matter. Dread of the visit goaded her into dragging herself from bed and dressing. The one clear thought in her confused mind was that she must escape it. Before Mrs. Mortimer Cuyler could set out she was told over the telephone that Mrs. Malone had run up to the

Shore house for a few days, and would call up her aunt when she came back.

Sleet had fallen along the coast, and the bare trees were clashing their icy twigs in a glitter of strong sunlight. Beyond the great house the sea was living sapphire, and its cold, salt breath came up the cliffs like a burst of health. An aged collie trotted out to question the arrival, then wept aloud for joy, and tried to gambol with a dear ridiculousness that made his mistress laugh. The caretaker stood beaming in the doorway.

"If I'd had more time, mem," she was apologizing.

Her daughter, scarlet with haste, was scurrying out of sight with brushes and cloths. The greater part of the house was closed, but a downstairs suite had been put in readiness, and big fires lighted the newly polished andirons. In the bedroom the sunlight fell squarely across the bed, and just below, at the foot of the cliffs, the surf foamed over black rocks. Lucy bent her face to the pillow.

"Oh, I want to go to bed!" she exclaimed.

She lay there all day with her eyes on the sea, the collie beside her, the two kind women zealous to serve. She had come home, and, for the moment, was dully content. But, in the night a misery of pain awoke her. What had once been the dearest hope of her life had come to her unheeded and unrecognized, and now it went away again. For

a week afterward she lay in the square of sunlight and watched the sea, and sorrowfully wished that her life had been the one to go out.

Health was breathed up at her out of the Atlantic and a new softness in the wind called her out. Interesting things were going on in the greenhouses and the garden, and presently she began to show earthy hands and an interest in seed catalogues. But with bodily health came the mind's inevitable awakening. Lucy had a remorseless moral intelligence. She could not walk down a street without holding a secret court of justice on every block: this nursemaid was unfair to her charge, that one showed sense in a crisis; this chauffeur was selfishly snatching a right of way not his and should be spoken to, that chauffeur was so courteous and considerate that one quite longed to smile at him. The moment was coming when she must face the charge that she had flung aside in her anger, and give impartial verdict.

The gardener begged a word with her, and set forth at length the powers of a new fertilizer, recommended at Washington. Lucy listened with a worried frown.

"But it is twice as expensive as the old; and you have always had good results," she reminded him. Then, inexplicably to him, she flushed up to her very hair. "Still, suppose you try it, if you are con-

vinced it is better," she conceded, and went hastily indoors. The unforgettable words were hurtling about her ears: "You are a miser. You love money. You hoard it. In God's name, for what?"

The charge was there, written in living letters before her shrinking sight, and she bravely walked herself up to it. Passionate denial could not serve her now: it was a case for grave justice. She closed her door, shutting out the wistful collie, and registered a breathless vow:

"I will be big in this if I die of it!" Then she seated herself, very erect in a straight chair, and invited all the witnesses of the past to bring in their evidence.

The defence crowded forward. There was her grandfather, her practical, careful mother, the family tone before the Mortimer Cuylers had broken away and introduced reckless new standards: there was prudence with her strict facts about the yearly earning power of a dollar; there was righteous example in a spendthrift age. Then, when the clamour of justification died down, other voices began to make themselves heard. They were, at first, mere whispers — unheeded comments and smiles, some words under an ancient cartoon of Adrian Cuyler, shown squeezing a coin until it dripped, Candace's gibes, and then, in dreary succession, the little tragedies of her married life. She remembered

every one, even that wretched moment of arrival in San Francisco; and things only half understood before, signs of hurt valiantly argued away, became horribly plain in the searching light of those last words. "You save it for its own sake. You hate to give. The meanest sin on earth —— "

Suddenly she rose from her chair, looking about her with startled eyes, as though on changed surroundings.

"It is true!" she said aloud.

The verdict was "Guilty." It remained only to pronounce sentence. Day after day Lucy loitered about the beautiful old place with absent, haunted eyes. Her face lost its childish curve, but took on a spirituality that deepened its loveliness to a rare beauty. Then, one morning, she came out dressed for departure, an exalted light in her face, as of a soul that has received its orders.

She had sent word that she was coming, and her own coachman was waiting for her, greeting ready; but Lucy, usually the most courteous of mistresses, seemed to forget that she had been away.

"Not home yet — to Mr. Battle's office," she said briefly.

All Lucy's affairs were cared for in the office of Stanley Battle; and her manner of business dealings, the sweetness and shyness and desire not to give trouble, and the sudden compressions of her lips.

their power of anxious sternness, were an endless amusement to an observant gentleman who had known both her Grandfather Cuyler and her Great Aunt Betty. But the latent glimmer in Mr. Battle's eyes was quenched this morning when Lucy had seated herself facing him in the private office. The usual friendly preliminaries were abruptly cut out.

"Well, Lucy?" he asked, and took up the paper knife that always served to engage his glance when clients had difficult things to say. In spite of her white cheeks, it was easier for her to speak than it often had been about some trivial matter. What she had gone through had swept aside the little fears and hesitations.

"Mr. Battle, I have made a discovery," she began slowly. "I suppose every one else has known it; but I have only just found it out. I am a miser."

He visibly started, then drew breath to protest, but she checked him.

"No. Let me say it all, for it is not easy. Only you have got to understand. A miser loves money, hates to part with it, saves it for its own sake — not for what he can do with it. And that is what I have been. It is a mean sin — one of the meanest on earth. It has nearly wrecked my married life. Dana didn't want the money; it wasn't that. But, don't you know, if you commit a mean sin over and over in a person's sight, he is so hurt that he can't

stand it? Suppose he had lied to me, for instance, every day: I must have shrunk from him, grown frightfully sensitive, don't you see? Oh, you must understand, you must follow what I am trying to tell you!" She wrung her hands in sudden desperation, but his quiet, "Yes, Lucy, I understand," steadied her again.

"I didn't dream it. I thought he simply wasn't very wise about money. And he isn't, you know" — a faint smile showed for an instant — "but the real wrong was all mine. And, at last, weeks ago, he — went away. He said he had to earn his own living. I had — humiliated him. He said he would never again — live on — my money." The pain of the words caught at her breath, but her eyes were clear as blue flames.

"You had to know everything," she went on, before he could speak. "What I have gone through since then — never mind that. But here is where I have come out. It all lies in, 'If thy right hand offend thee ——' There is no other solution. I can not trust myself to be different — to stay different. It is like a birthmark" — she drew her hand across her breast — "a part of me. I could always be made generous for the moment; but my imagination never stays awake for the next case. So I am going to make over the bulk of my property to my husband. Don't protest — don't warn and

advise me. I want this done now, in secret, without letting Dana know."

Mr Battle needed the paper knife for his own sake.

"Might not some compromise —— ?" he threw out.

"Yes: there is one compromise. I was coming to that. I will keep the Shore house, and ten thousand a year, which you are to turn over to charity. Not a cent of that is to go through my hands now. But if Dana should lose all the rest — and he may, you know" — again that rare little new-born smile flashed out — "we can retreat there and have enough to live on. No other compromise. I have been through them all: I began that way. Will you do it, right now?" He looked into the white glow of her face, and took her hand between his.

"I have heard nothing but good of your husband, Lucy. I believe that he is an honourable and upright young fellow: I could see that he was. But have you thought what your family will say?"

There was no aspect that Lucy had not faced. "But you are to keep it absolutely secret," she explained. "They are not to find out until it is such an old story, it doesn't matter. And that won't be hard — there is so little real estate. Most of it will be just a matter of signatures — mine now, and Dana's when I have told him." Her hand clung to his. "You can make it hard or easy; but

it is going to happen. I am keeping the greater thing, Mr. Battle."

He was not yet won over; but Lucy's affairs were in her own control, and she was quietly ready to take them out of his office that very day if he did not carry out her wishes. At last he literally threw up his hands.

"And if some day you come back to rate me for this —— " he said, rising. She was pulling off her gloves.

"Let me sign everything right now," she said.

The horses grew very restless and the coachman very hungry before Lucy at last came out

"Oh, I am sorry, Nichols. I forgot you were waiting," she exclaimed, and there was a light in her face, a beauty of peace, that even a hungry coachman might not miss.

"It's all right, Miss Lucy," he said, reverting to the name under which he had driven her for twenty years.

It seemed to Lucy that her only task now was to wait Dana would come or send. Since she had climbed the barrier and seen things with his eyes, she was as sure of his love as she was of the breath of life in her own body. Sooner or later, it would bring him back. Her spirit ached for him, struggling alone in his hurt pride, but she knew that he must succeed, must come to her on his own terms. Nothing less would satisfy him.

There were begging letters in Lucy's mail the next morning. She started worriedly to consider them, then tore them across with a laugh.

"That is Dana's business now!" was her thought. A Ways and Means Committee reminded her that a very important meeting was to be held that morning, and urged her attendance; Lucy laughed again, as mischievously as the girl of Sky Farm, and ran upstairs to get out her paints. For two happy hours she laboured, and sent invisible messages of love and hope to Dana, and sang under her breath.

"I'd better slave," she warned herself. "I may have to sell my works, if Dana doesn't allow me enough." Then she laughed aloud, and put out her arms to him, heedless of palette and brushes. "Darling boy, do hurry," she breathed.

A slow step and a rustle on the stairs brought a craven desire to hide. She had not told any one that she was back, but, of course, the family knew it. They always knew. And no one but an aunt could mount quite so like an approaching doom. A tiny clanking told that, at least, it was not Aunt Margaret; Mrs. Stephen Cuyler had no use for lorgnons and vanity boxes

"Well, Lucy, I took the liberty of coming up;" Mrs. Mortimer Cuyler was sufficiently worldly to make a cheerful entrance, even if her errand might be uncheerful, and Lucy was grateful for the

respite. As a younger woman, Aunt Frances had been big and plain, but with maturity and white hair had come an unexpected gift of beauty. People stared at her on the street, jumped to serve her in cars; and though she bore this belated flowering with dignity, as a large woman must, her enjoyment of it crept out in little gestures and turns of her well-carried head and in the gay assurance of her smile. Even a trying errand could not quite dim her consciousness of the delightful miracle.

"I haven't forgotten that I promised to call you up, Aunt Frances," Lucy said. "I am only just back."

Mrs. Cuyler looked at the sketch and was pleasantly appreciative, then went on to family news and questions about the country. Lucy's alarmed heart was quieting down when, without warning, the attack came.

"Lucy, I have just heard some annoying gossip. I don't believe a word of it, but I think you ought to know that it is being said." To emphasize the unimportance of the communication, Mrs. Cuyler produced a tiny round mirror on a gold handle and looked critically at one fine eye. Lucy's thought had leaped to Mr. Battle, and she stiffened in a panic of dread and anger. "It is about Dana," Aunt Frances added.

Lucy's colour came back in a relieved rush and

she sank down on the nearest chair. "Then it isn't true," she said, so convincingly th Mrs. Cuyler felt free to drop the mirror and settle k.

"I was sure of that. It was too absurd. (Lucy, don't you like these shoes? I am trying a new man.) But then, who is the child?"

"The child?"

"The little boy who is living with him. People are saying — ah, one can't repeat such things to you." Aunt Frances again had recourse to the little mirror. "But you must expect gossip, Lucy, if you two stay apart so long."

Lucy's downcast face told nothing. "I want to know just what is being said," she insisted.

"Why, it came through a friend of Laura's, whose brother sat next a New York painter at a dinner the other night. Ludlow — was that the name?"

"Ludlam!" Lucy spoke so sharply that the other paused inquiringly. "A hateful little man. He doesn't like Dana, Aunt Frances. Please go on."

"I haven't it very clearly. The tale was that something unpleasant had happened in San Francisco, and that, as a result, Dana was living permanently in New York with this boy."

"And people suppose that it is his?" Lucy was aghast. "Why, it is some music pupil, of course. I never in my life heard anything so silly, so outrageous. That Ludlam —— "

"You can't scold down gossip, my dear Lucy." Mrs. Cuyler glanced at her watch and rose. "I must run — my masseuse comes at eleven. I wish you would try her; your colour isn't what it was. Of course, I don't know what is keeping Dana in New York; but, if he can't leave, you would do well to go there, if you will forgive my saying it."

Lucy was pulling off her painting apron.

"I'll take the one o'clock," she said, breathless with indignation. "How can people tell such wicked lies! How can they!"

Mrs. Cuyler had a delicate shrug. "If you will live apart — !" she might have said. But she had struck that note once, and, getting no explanation, would not try again. Lucy was not sufficiently modern to be attacked with plain questions.

Long before she had reached New York, Lucy had forgotten the cause of her going. Perhaps, after all, her righteous wrath had been largely the soul's pretext for running to him. It was there, a vague support, to serve her if she found herself unwelcome — but at that word she laughed, and her fingers curled tightly into her palms. She planned no introductory sentences. It would be just an opening door, then "Lucy!" and "Dana!" and a close silence. No need of words. She was glad that she was making the first move, glad of everything, even of past pain. Since her interview with Mr. Battle,

her spirit had felt a marvellous lightness. She seemed to be skimming over the awakening country on poised wings.

Providence, New London, New Haven, New York; a dream consciousness of streaming human crowds and the crash of streets; then a sudden, dreadful awakening at big, new portals, clumsily ornate. Lucy stood helpless before them, terror stricken, bodily unable to move. Dana might not want her. She set down her bag, and made her glove an excuse for delay.

"I really am not very well fitted for this world," she admitted, with a gasp for breath. Then she cried shame on herself so effectually that, three minutes later, she was at Dana's door.

From within came the stodgy beat of a piano study, broken at frequent intervals by little flights of notes, escaping in runs and trills. Lucy's knock was a bare touch, but sharp ears heard it, and the music stopped. The door was opened by a small, dark-skinned boy, whose mournfully brown eyes, by the mere act of being lifted, gave a misleading effect of pathos. Lucy shrank back.

"I thought this was Mr. Malone's apartment," she apologized.

"It is, but he's not here." The boy hesitated, then opened the door wider. "Did you want music lessons?" he suggested. "Because I can tell

you when he can give them to you. I know all about his affairs."

Lucy smiled a little and came in, her glance passing quickly about the room. In spite of Candace's offerings, it seemed to her touchingly bare, and her fear was swallowed up in mothering compassion. She turned to the uncurtained windows, that she might hide her face.

"When will he be back?" she asked obliviously of Luis. He hesitated, craftily considering.

"Mr. Malone is a most re-markable teacher," he announced, standing before her with hands deep in his pockets. "Everybody wants to be taught by him; he has only a little time left. Two, three evenings. I can write your name down; and then perhaps he will take you."

The curious little creature was beginning to engage her attention. "Are you one of his pupils?" she asked.

The boy's chest rose. "Oh, I am his Luis," he threw off.

"His — what?"

"His Luis. I have come from San Francisco to live with him and become a great musician."

The smile was stricken out of the pretty lady's eyes. She looked frightened, hurt. "Not Luis Valdez?"

The name drew a flash of anger. "No! I do not

keep the name of those pigs. I am Mr. Malone's Luis. My father and my mother will lie dead in the gutter, and I will jump over them and laugh!"

His scorn of the Fifth Commandment passed unnoticed. The lady had sunk down on the couch, and she rocked slightly, as though the pain were sharp.

"Ah, and he sent for you;" she covered her face with her hands. "With all this, he sent for you. Oh, my dear, my dear!"

"No, he didn't send for me," Luis contradicted. "I brought myself. I am like that. I can do anything." She seemed so glad to hear it that he told her more of his coming, and brought out a treasured letter. "That's what he wrote me. You can read it if you like."

She sat so long over the letter that Luis stood beside her to help her out.

"The writing is very plain," he said. "I made it all out by myself. That is 'debt of gratitude' there. It is this way: 'Mr. Bynner was as good to me when I was a boy as he has been to you, and I owe him such a debt of gratitude that I want to pay it to you.' That means —— "

"Yes, I know what it means," she interposed gently, her face still shielded by her hand.

"He is the best man in the world," Luis stated. "I would let myself be cut in pieces for him, so."

His hand crisscrossed his little body. "I am to live with him until she drives me out."

"Who drives you out?"

"His cat of a wife." Luis spat out the words, then, seeing the lady recoil, apologized. "I do not call her that to him — at least, not again. I thought he would kill me." He shivered with an awed memory of the moment. "He stood so — oh, like a lion! Then he dropped his hand and he said, 'Luis! If you speak of her that way again, I will lick the life out of you!' Oh, he was terrible." Luis settled down beside her with a wriggle of artistic satisfaction. "I wish you had seen him."

A gentle, gloved hand rested on his shoulder. "Perhaps she will let you stay," the lady suggested. Luis's headshake was hopeless.

"There isn't room. I'd be under her feet all the time. I am not to expect it."

"But suppose he moved to a nice house, where there was plenty of room?"

Male exasperation took him to his feet: from closed eyes to swinging foot, his little body expressed, "If that isn't just like a woman!" At last he spoke:

"How — in — thunder — do you think we'd pay for it? Aren't we working day and night to pay for this?"

The lady laughed aloud, a laugh so full of warmth and merriment that Luis found his scowl of offence

hard to maintain. He turned away, loftily, but she called him back.

"Luis! When will Mr. Malone be in?"

Again he evaded the question. "Did you want evening lessons?"

"I want all the evenings he can give me."

Luis scrambled for a pad and pencil. "Write it down," he said eagerly.

"But I would rather wait to see him."

At last it came. "Well — but he won't be home to-night."

The lady looked ready to cry. "Oh, Luis! Why not? Where has he gone?"

"He might be, of course," Luis amended. "I couldn't be *dead* certain. But he's gone to Boston."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Luis dearly loved to make a sensation; and he had undeniably made one. The lady half rose, as though she would run to Boston herself, and Luis could not tell whether she was very glad or very sorry. She listened to his account of a letter and a sudden departure that morning with flattering intensity.

"Perhaps you know about the letter," he suggested, conscious of things unspoken.

She shook her head; she did not seem to care about that. "He will be back to-night, Luis," she said. "Do you mind if I wait for him?"

Luis was enchanted; he seldom had so devout an audience. The lady hung on his words, and the glow in her face lifted him into an ecstasy of self-appreciation.

"I certainly am a re-markable boy," he told himself at happy intervals. At her suggestion, he showed her the bare little kitchen and explained their housekeeping devices. Then he exhibited their sleeping arrangements and made up his bed on the rug, politely offering to let her try its delights.

But when she asked about the other door, he sprang to defend it.

"You can't go in there," he exclaimed. "That is his wife's room. No one else can go in it, except just the lady that comes to sweep." Lucy turned away, twisting her hands together.

"I cannot bear it," she said softly.

Luis, fearing that she was going, offered to play to her, and worked off his excitement at the piano, not dreaming that his motionless audience did not hear one note. When he stopped, his eyes were swimming with sleep.

"I will play more for you another day," he mumbled. As from a long distance, he heard the lady urge him to go to bed, and he drowsily obeyed, rousing himself for a moment to demand admiration for his blue pajamas. Then his head sank into the cushions and he was off.

As soon as he was asleep, Lucy rose and quietly opened the forbidden door. The little room was like a shrine; every object had been placed there in love of her. At first the effort that had gone into it nearly broke her heart. Then she remembered what she had done for love of him, and her head lifted.

"I am not unworthy," she said.

For several days past Dana had felt despair

coming nearer and nearer. The stand he had taken was right, but he could not maintain it. He was not fitted to support a wife. He was throwing his talent and his health — all he had — into his offering, yet he could not make it good enough. The vision of Lucy in those bare quarters, badly served, crowded for space, brought a flush of shame and helpless anger. If he had married some hardy little art student, who could hop into a kimono and get breakfast while he was shaving, they might have pulled through financially and even had energy over for other things; but he had allied himself to a House, and its daughter never entered a kitchen but as a shy, stately mistress with orders. He had no regrets for the little art student; the fine-lady quality in Lucy had drawn him just as the Dana inheritance had spread romance for Dan Malone, his father, son of old Brian Malone of the inspired fiddle. But he began to see, drearily, that he who makes such an alliance has to lop off some of his natural instincts: he may not inevitably be the head of his household. Sooner or later, he must come down from his first hot demand. Perhaps, if Lucy would live — in her own fashion — where he could earn his living, the compromise might be tolerable. Pride winced, of course; but they had hurt each other so horribly! Sometimes the only thing in life that seemed to mat-

ter was to win her back and so ease that incessant ache.

"What if I went to her to-day?" The thought had been in his mind that very morning, holding him stock-still in the middle of the kitchen, a pot of oatmeal in one hand. Luis, seated expectantly before a bowl, waited in silence, a hopeful glimmer in his eyes. Once, during an abstracted moment, Dana had carefully emptied the scrambled eggs into the sink, and Luis lived for another such joyous event. The postman's ring spoiled the chances this time, and the boy slipped down to answer it; a little praise kept Luis at a high pitch of usefulness. Dana, startled back to the present, was serving the oatmeal and glancing at his watch like any other punctual business man when the letter was laid before him. At first glance, he saw only that it was not from Lucy. Then the printed heading caught his eye.

"Oh, by jinks!" he breathed, and tore open the envelope.

He had felt a calm certainty that his "Children's Crusade Suite" would win the prize; yet, now that it had come, he could not believe his senses. Luis questioned in vain; he was deaf to everything but his own inner shout of joy. A thousand dollars might not mean an established income, but, oh, it meant Lucy! He could at least go to her with full hands and an offering of glory. He dragged out

a bag and made a faint effort to pack it intelligently; then gave up with an explosive, "Oh, what's the use!" and banged it shut on whatever it might contain. His coffee was poured out, so he drank it, standing.

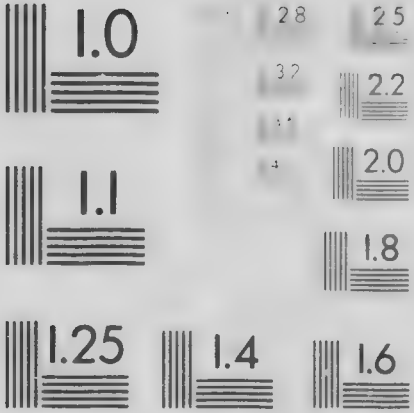
"I have to go to Boston, Luis," he explained. "Here's a dollar. You will have to look out for yourself as best you can. I'll be back soon — to-morrow ——" He was leaving, but Luis's hand on his coat stopped him at the door.

"Don't you want your hat?" the boy demanded in astonished reproach. Dana laughed and admitted that he did, tried wildly to consider if other practical matters were being overlooked, then shrugged off all earthly cares and ran for his train.

The first dismay at finding Lucy gone was wiped out by an awed joy. For she had taken train to New York, and the address she had left for her letters was his. Dana marvelled over it, at first solemnly, then with a jubilant leap of pulses. She had run to him, even as he had run to her, and there would be no need of words.

His outer door opened on darkness, but a light from the inner room showed where she was. Dana went quietly past the sleeping Luis and pushed back the door. Lucy, hearing him, had started to her feet, but she stood motionless until their eyes met. Then it was all as she had foreseen — "Lucy!" and "Dana!" and a close silence.

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART



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CHAPTER TWELVE

"I CAN'T go down to the office. I can't do it!" Dana laughed, in the tone of one who, nevertheless, is about to do the impossible. He sat on the side of the bed, and the coffee and toast he had brought in cooled forgotten on the little oval table. Lucy's morning face had a rose-petal flush between her brown braids and her eyes were blue as cornflowers; but her beauty had gone deeper than these things, and Dana, feeling it, had to bend his head to her hands to express his fealty. He wanted to go down on his knees to her, but, being of his generation, he could only laugh at himself and wait on her with brimming zeal.

"Don't go," she urged, knowing that he would.

"My beloved, I don't believe I even telephoned them yesterday. If I did, I have no recollection of it. I simply lit out." They laughed and clung to each other for the sake of that simultaneous flight. "But you will come down and lunch with me? Without fail?"

"Without fail."

"It is all right about Luis. Father Grant will

take him for a few days, anyway, till we come to" he hesitated, and the light was a little dimmed - "practical arrangements," he concluded manfully. "We have a lot to talk over, Lucy."

"Not yet; not to-day," she begged. "Just love me, Dana."

"I'll 'just love you' to the end of my days." He dragged himself to his feet. "I must go. Don't mind if Luis looks knives and daggers at you; he'll come round."

Lucy had a tiny smile at the corner of her mouth. "We seem to have acquired our little Frederick," she murmured. Dana sat down again.

Five minutes later, he departed at a run, calling a word of cheer to Luis as he passed. Luis made no answer. His scowling little face was bent over a bundle containing his few earthly possessions. When Lucy came out, determined on reconciliation, he had gone.

The "lady who comes in to sweep" had been sent for and bribed to stay by the day, so there was nothing for Lucy to do. Spring called to her at the open windows. Even the breath of the city had an April sweetness. She went down into the streets and walked aimlessly in a daze of happiness. Once she found herself under the elevated, and the splashes of sunlight falling through its barred shade transformed it into a gigantic semblance of the grape

arbour of the Shore garden, and so made her heart thud with delight. The very signs of the shops struck notes of beauty and romance. "Black, Starr and Frost"! — who could pass that magic combination without the thrill of keen nights? "C. Hymes" over an obscure door said "Chimes" to Lucy, and the street rang with the lovely word. A wet steel rail, seen in a side glimpse, took on a piercing blue, as entrancing as the sudden note of a thrush. Puffs of white steam, curling with luminous intensity into bright sky, seemed to carry her spirit up with them like a white offering. The swinging doors of the cathedral suggested that she must thank some one's God for all this, so she stepped into its sudden, rich coolness, and, finding a seat behind a pillar, went down on her knees, burying her face in her arms. Again there was no need of words.

It was Saturday, and Dana had so arranged his work that he need not go back to his office that afternoon.

"What shall I do with you?" he asked, leaning back in his chair, the better to look at her. They had lunched gorgeously and conspicuously, yearning to be seen together by old friends, yet nervous of possible questions, since the future was still undiscussed. They had talked of everything else — of Dana's prize and of the hope that had come and gone, of "Mary Alone," and Ludlam and Candace

and of all the love and misery of those interminable weeks: only the blighting theme of money had been avoided. Lucy debated his question, but, meeting his eyes, forgot to answer it. "What will you have done with you, Miss Lucy?" he repeated.

Her glance turned to the open windows. "Hire a motor and take me out of town," she commanded, and so very nearly got herself embraced in a public café. "My *dear*," she breathed, with a gasp for the closeness of her escape. He laughed and took her coat from the waiter. As he held it, his glance, passing over intervening tables, met Ludlam's pale gaze, fixed on them with an intensity that was almost dismayed. Dana nodded blithely, then muttered a disgusted:

"Oh, confound it!"

"What?" she asked.

He did not explain until they were outside. "I saw a man in there that I intended to cut; and I forgot all about it."

Lucy was amused. "I will wait while you go back and do it," she suggested; then added a quick, "Oh—was it Mr. Ludlam?" Dana nodded. "I shall not forget to cut him," she promised, with early Victorian stateliness.

They sped home for wraps and veils, and a car was at the door by the time they were ready. Not till

they had left the city far behind them did Dana remember Luis.

"I meant to see him or call him up," he explained. "Poor little chap, his nose is rather out of joint."

"We will see him to-morrow," she comforted him.

They came home late that night, drowsy, sunburned, as happy as two people may be with a momentous topic unbroached between them. Once or twice Lucy had tried to prepare Dana for what she had done, to edge up to the mighty secret, but courage dismally failed her. The pure justice of her sentence and her exaltation in carrying it out had lifted her for the time being into a simpler world, where truth and righteousness held unquestioned sway; she had overlooked the scruples and sensitivenesses that must complicate Dana's acceptance of her act. The thought that she might have to fight him as she had fought herself and Mr. Battle appalled her. She even caught herself in a craven desire to fall very ill, so that Dana might be too concerned about her to protest at anything; and, for shame's sake, made an attempt at the topic. They were sitting over a late breakfast in Sunday morning laziness, glancing through the letters they had been too sleepy to open the night before. She handed three sheets across to him.

"What would you do with those?" she asked.

They were all appeals for money. One of them

Dana threw aside with a laugh; a second with sounds of contempt; the third he read with kindling interest.

"Good letter," he observed. "It sounds all right."

"But what would you do?"

"Why, look it up, of course. Find out if the need of an infirmary is as bad as they say, and how these people stand. If it turned out as good as it sounds, I'd give -- let me see: they are trying to raise fifty thousand dollars. Well, I'd give a thousand now, and perhaps more later."

"And you would enjoy doing it," said Lucy.

"Oh, yes. I'd like meeting those men and hearing what they had to say. I like human dealings."

"A rich man should," she said bravely. "You would be a better person than I to have money, Dana." The words had an intention that he could not ignore: they said, "You were right," and her steady eyes repeated the message. The hideous charge on which they had parted lay uncovered before Dana's shamed sight. He went round to her and hid his face in her shoulder.

"I'm sorry," he whispered. "I'm sorry — sorry —— "

"No: I am glad. I had to learn. Dana —— "

The telephone came to her rescue. Sternest resolution could not go on with that bell buzzing in the corner. Lucy dropped back in her chair,

weak with unrighteous relief. She heard Dana's, "Oh, Father Grant: good morning! How are you?" and had time for a silent rhapsody over the beloved, inborn cordiality with which he met all the world before the tiny, metallic echo that was the priest's voice reached her understanding.

"When is the boy coming over?" he was saying.

They talked at cross purposes, puzzling each other; then Dana broke out with a startled:

"Great Scott! You don't mean that he hasn't turned up? Why, he left here yesterday morning!"

Luis had not turned up; and he had been gone twenty-four hours. Lucy could tell nothing, and Dana hurried downstairs to make inquiries. An elevator boy remembered Luis's departure with his bundle, and had noticed that he turned east when he left the building. Father Grant lived to the west, but the boy was certain. He had watched because Luis seemed to be in a curious state of mind, and had met their usual opening for repartee with a silent snarl, baring his teeth like a small tiger. He had walked away slowly, yet with purpose: he seemed to know where he was going.

As a matter of form, Dana called up police and hospitals, but he knew very well that there had been no accident. Luis had a dollar in his pocket, rage in his heart, and he had run away.

"I ought to have given more time to him," Dana

reproached himself. "I could have straightened him out in ten minutes; but I was so wrapped up in you, I couldn't think of anything else. And, of course, he saw it."

Lucy shivered. "It is so horrible to be jealous!" He turned to her in surprise.

"What do you know about it, Lucy Cuyler?" he demanded. She smiled, but would not explain. The time had gone by forever when his love for California could go through her like a knife.

They gave the police a description of Luis and set out to search the city streets. The morning was fruitless, but, while they were lunching, a policeman appeared with Luis's bundle. It had been found hidden in the bushes by a Park lake, where the boy had evidently slept; and with it were his cap, shoes, and stockings. A remark about having the lake examined made Lucy turn white, but Dana refused to be alarmed.

"He is taking care of himself, you can bet on that," he assured her. "I know him." Lucy still saw dreadful pictures of a little body drifting, face down.

"Oh, he must be found," she exclaimed. "We will give five hundred dollars, gladly ——" Then she broke off with a gasp; for she had suddenly remembered that the five hundred dollars she had with her was all the money she possessed in the

world. Dana, coming back from final words with the officer, found her looking more frightened than ever.

"He's all right, darling," he comforted her. "I give you my word, he's better fitted to take care of himself than I am."

"I — hope so. O Dana, I wish we could find him ourselves!"

"You're such a little brick," he murmured.

They took a taxicab for the afternoon, and went up and down the city till they were worn out. Five o'clock found them sitting, limp and speechless, in a Park restaurant with a pot of tea between them. After a reviving cup, Dana went to call up headquarters for news. Lucy sat, vacant with weariness, staring at the bizarre women and sleek, thick-necked men that motors and carriages kept depositing at the foot of the broad steps.

She thought she must have fallen asleep, for suddenly she was listening to "Mary Alone." She started, shaking her head to clear it of dreams; but the strain persisted, a mournful piping — "Mary Alone" done into another language. Others were turning to some sight on the gravel beneath, and their amusement checked the waiters, who had started forward to stop the intrusion. Lucy rose in time to see a small son of Spain, bareheaded and barefooted, a musical pipe pressed to his cheek, old-

world eyes lifted as though to the gods, playing money out of the nearest pockets with an appalling surety. She started forward, but others, rising, blocked her path.

"Luis!" she called, but too faintly to be noticed.

The child stood with the assurance of acknowledged genius, his perfect melancholy untouched by the laughter in the faces above him. He was enjoying himself superbly; and not by the flicker of an eyelash did he betray consciousness of the silver dropping at his feet. Luis was destined to unnumbered successes with women, and a keen prophet might have seen the signs then in the laughing attention bent on him; but never would his charm fly home more swiftly and certainly than it did now to his first real conquest. Lucy had appreciated his devotion to Dana, had determined to overcome her instinctive class shrinking from the ragamuffin in him and to love him for Dana's sake; and suddenly here she was, filled with warm laughter over him and a mighty, mothering desire to shake him well. She pressed forward, losing sight of him for the moment. When she reached the steps, a Park policeman held a struggling, furious Luis by the shoulder.

"I guess you're the kid we're looking for," he was saying with genial satisfaction. "Here, drop that wildcat business, sonny, or I'll —— "

"Luis!" Lucy ran down to him, heedless of curious

eyes. "Luis, dear!" The voice meant rescue, and Luis's struggles ceased. "My dear little boy, we have been looking for you all day long!" Her arm was about him, her eyes spoke understanding and tenderness. Luis's sullen gaze fell — and encountered the silver. In an instant, he had it pocketed with a deftness that brought another laugh from the tables.

Dana, coming out, heard the tale, and hastened to get his family away from the intensely interested spectators. The policeman showed reluctance at parting from Luis.

"It was me found him," he insisted.

"Oh, yes. You may come for the reward at any time," said Lucy serenely. In the cab, her arm slipped about the silent Luis.

"He's a tired boy, Dana," she said. "Don't scold him to-night. He must be so hungry."

Dana's hand, having brushed Luis's pocket, was unceremoniously thrust in, and brought out a handful of silver and copper.

"H'm — hungry!" he observed. "Luis, I can see that bringing you up isn't going to be unmixed joy. You go into a good, stiff school next fall, young man."

"But he will spend the summer with us," said Lucy.

Luis gave her a swift, cool glance. There was

a patronizing acceptance in it, as though jealousy had realized that here were scarcely grounds for any real alarm. His head slipped an inch nearer her shoulder, in token that he was willing to let her take his side, and Lucy, curiously humble and pleased, had thoughts of ponies and tutors for this little son of the streets.

The reward was paid that evening: five hundred dollars in bills. Lucy was so very grave afterward that Dana was troubled.

"You needn't have paid it," he told her. "He didn't really find him; we were right there. I ought to have said so at the time."

"No: I am glad it happened," was the puzzling answer, and suddenly Lucy laughed aloud, a breathless, astonished laugh that ended against his shoulder. "O Dana, life is so funny," she stammered.

"So Candy says," was the sober answer.

More than once, in the days that followed, Dana stopped short to demand:

"Lucy, what is it? What has happened?" But she would only laugh and slip away from the question. There was some bubbling well of spirits just under the surface. When Dana made a serious business of hurrying off to his office, her eyes mocked him: when he came home tired and fagged, her mothering tenderness had the same mischievous gleam. He had seen her as merry on

the hills of Sky Farm, but never as alluringly wicked, and he fell in love with her "all over again from the beginning," as he expressed it. In some mysterious way she had broken the mighty grip that held her, and found freedom. She would not talk of money. In fact, she would not do anything that she ought to, and she enjoyed her own defiance so exquisitely that he could only follow her lead in devout acquiescence.

On the fifth morning, as he was putting together some papers, the frown of the punctual business man on his forehead, she suddenly appeared before him with an air of scared purpose. She wore an absurd little dressing sack with fluttering lace for sleeves, and her brown braids lay on her shoulders. Her hands were clasped behind her back.

"Dana!"

"Yes, dear?" Mortal man could not have shown himself more approachable, yet her colour rose and fell, and, in spite of her amused eyes, she visibly gasped.

"It's only — Dana, dear — I — haven't any money. Could you let me have some?"

Could he! His hand plunged into a well-filled pocket and offered her its entire contents. She would have taken a modest bill, but he pressed it all into her hands and closed them over it.

"You'll need it, dearest," he urged.

Lucy looked down at her hands, still held closely between his, as though making a discovery. He waited till it came in words.

"Dana — I *like* taking it from you."

"God knows how I like giving it to you!" Then a clock struck, and he had to go.

Lucy painted every morning in her bedroom, where the light was better than in the sunny main room. She was developing from memory sketches made in the Shore garden, and the plain little room, fitted out so laboriously in love of her, seemed to weave a spell about her, so that she worked with enchanted brushes on fairy canvas, and held scenes of magic beauty under her eyelids. So deep was the glamour that surrounded her, that morning, that she did not notice the opening of the door behind her, and worked on in happy unconsciousness of a spectator on the threshold. Fifteen minutes later a voice made her jump.

"I'd leave it there," it said. "You'll overdo it if you go on."

"Candy!" Lucy flew to her, but could get little personal attention; Candace was intent on the sketch. She looked at it from so many angles that Lucy grew worried. "I haven't had any time to work this winter," she apologized.

At last Candy turned to her.

"What has happened to you?" she demanded.

"You've got it at last — the thing I've been preaching at you all these years in vain. You've let go. And I didn't think you could. What taught you?"

"Life, I suppose," said Lucy, with a sigh for the price she had paid.

"Go on living, then. That's painting. Come and work with me while you are in town." Then Candace returned to personal matters, a smile curling the corners of her sleepy little eyes. "Well?" she queried.

"All well, thank you;" Lucy smiled and flushed.

"Had a pretty bad time?"

"It is over now, Candy. Over for ever and ever."

"H'm. It is if you have learned to laugh; not otherwise." Candace turned back to the main room and settled down with an air of having come on business. "Lucy, how about Sky Farm? I have gathered an idea that you thought that rather a failure — the cabin part of it."

Lucy checked an impulsive, "Oh, no!" and sat down to consider. "Yes, on the whole, I did," she admitted.

"Take them one by one."

"Well: Mr. Ludlam. He certainly was not worthy of being helped. He used and despised it."

"I grant you Ludlam."

"Adamovitch. You remember how he ran away without a word of good-bye or appreciation?"

"Yes; but he came to me last winter and apologized. He was desperate with homesickness, and he went back to Russia. He told me that the place saved him: he has had a successful season. Palmer Jacks did work there that has set him solidly on his feet — oh, atrocious work, I admit, but he sells it and he's happy — I think he is even looking for a lady to marry him;" Candace's hardy brown face was all curled up in smiling lines. "And though he is still poor enough, he won't take the cabin for this year. Give it to some other poor devil, he says. Not much harm done there?"

"No," Lucy admitted.

"Some one will always have to look out for little Willing: it might as well be me as any one else. You can't say he isn't grateful. The Dabneys want me to build a cottage there and rent it to them; they must feel that they got something. As for Dana Malone — I don't think his cabin was wasted, little Lucy!"

A vision of what her life would have been if Dana's cabin had not been built brought Lucy to Candace's side. "O Candy, if we hadn't!" she cried.

"I thought as much. Well, now, what is your wish? Shall I go on lending the cabins? It isn't a brilliant record, I admit. I could rent them and pay you a good interest on the investment."

Lucy winced. "Please don't. I want you to go on lending them, of course."

"Very well. I have several candidates in mind." Candace rose. "I want to hear about your plans, but I mustn't stop now. When are you two children coming to dine with me?"

Lucy's pause marked the taking of a mighty resolution.

"To-morrow night," she said, and so stood committed to telling Dana that night the appalling secret that he was a rich man.

He made it harder for her by coming home in a blaze of excitement over his "Children's Crusade." He had had an interview with the leader of the orchestra that was to play it, and the appreciation shown him had started the strings and brasses echoing in his ears. After dinner, he had to play bits of it to her, to illustrate the great man's praises. He seemed wholly absorbed in his subject, and yet suddenly he swung round and caught her in his arms as she stood beside him.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "Have you got to scold me for something — is that it? Or have you committed some awful crime yourself? Out with it!" She drew a deep breath of resolution; then let it out again.

"It is going to be so hard to make you understand," she faltered.

"No, dear, it isn't." He had turned grave, and his arms released her. "Say it slowly, just as you mean it, and I will understand. Of course, it is this everlasting money business," he added. "I have things to say about it, too."

She stood hesitating, then, with a desperate gesture, turned to a portfolio on the table and took out a letter.

"I wrote it, in case — don't be angry — don't fight me! Oh, if you can only understand!"

She thrust the letter into his hands and ran into her own room, closing the door. Dana sat down under the light, and, breaking the envelope, looked about as though dimly aware that all his world would bear a different aspect when he had finished reading.

DEAREST: Please read this with all your heart and soul, so that you will understand. When I was up at the Shore house I saw things as if I had been lifted miles above the earth, and were looking down on a poor little Lucy and Dana struggling below. Not all at once. For weeks I saw only the different sides. I fought it all out, inch by inch, and you won: and then I tried to think what we could do. I made terms and treaties by the hundred, but they were never right; there was always room for more trouble. And, then one night—O Dana, such a marvellous night! I went straight up and sat among the gods, and I saw this case of Dana and Lucy as clearly and inexorably as if it had been written on stone tablets. My right hand had offended, and it would offend again. Love, I cut it off.

I never was fitted to be a rich woman. I didn't know there

was such freedom, such lightness, in the world. It has even got into my painting — Candy will tell you. I have put my burden on you; but you will carry it happily and use it well, and make another thing of our lives. Come home and be the head of your house. It is all done. You are absolute master of everything and I am only your wife, who loves you.

At first Dana could see only his own pained protest. The thing was impossible, monstrous: the red of pure shame rushed to his face. He started up to tell her so, then, remembering her imploring, "Don't fight me!" he conceded to her a second reading of the letter. A slow third reading followed. Its living truth caught and held him. "I have put my burden on you": there was the change in her made clear — the change that had showed in every movement of her body and spirit. She had broken from her inheritance. She was right: he would carry the burden better.

"But how can I?" burst from him.

Very slowly, with many turnings back, the letter lifted him up to where Lucy had risen, and he saw with new vision the case of Dana and Lucy. He had failed to keep his marriage sweet and whole, and this was his punishment. Instead of meeting evil strongly with love and truth, he had suffered it in helpless passivity, as though the outcome were no affair of his. He had been a sensitive boy, brooding over a grievance, where life had called for

a thinking man. Now he must stand by and see Lucy come shining out of that dark failure and go up past him to heights of serene nobility. All the beauty of atonement was for her: for him, the humiliation of being appeased and recompensed, of having his grievance healed. He accepted his part, but his pride was trailed in the dust; shame held him in a constraining grip. He could not go to her and tell her so.

It was then, as he stood faltering, that the outer aspect of the letter in his hand caught his attention. The sheet had come to an end too soon, so Lucy had crowded the last page, and squeezed the final lines into the margin. She had given away millions, but she had saved a sheet of paper, and Dana, seeing, was caught unawares by a gust of silent laughter. It shook him, warmed him, lifted him from his abasement and scattered his constraint to the four winds of a radiant heaven; and it put him back beside his wife.

"Lucy!" he shouted.

THE END

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